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Neither superpower can explain a competition that threatens mutual annihilation

BY THOMAS POWERS

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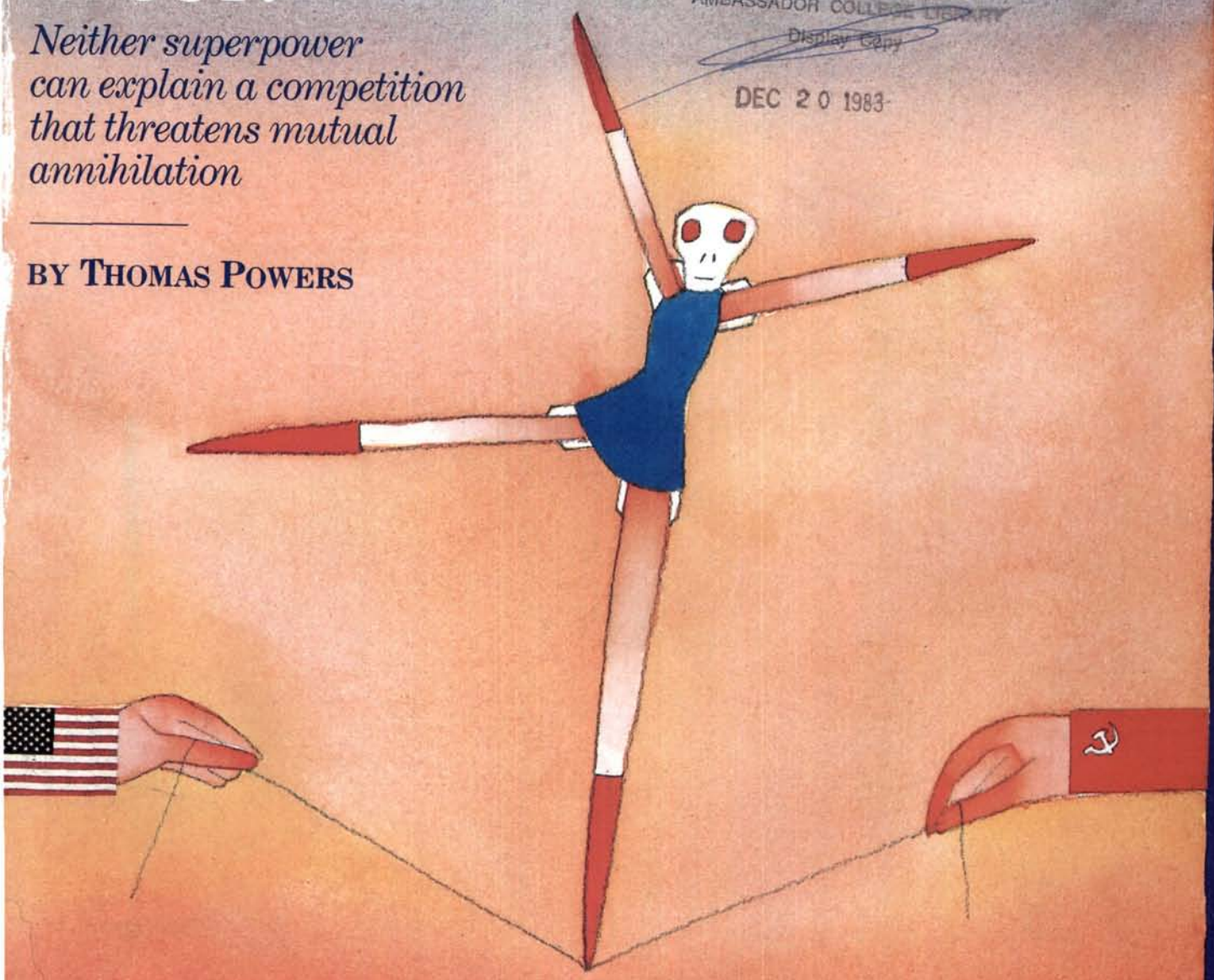

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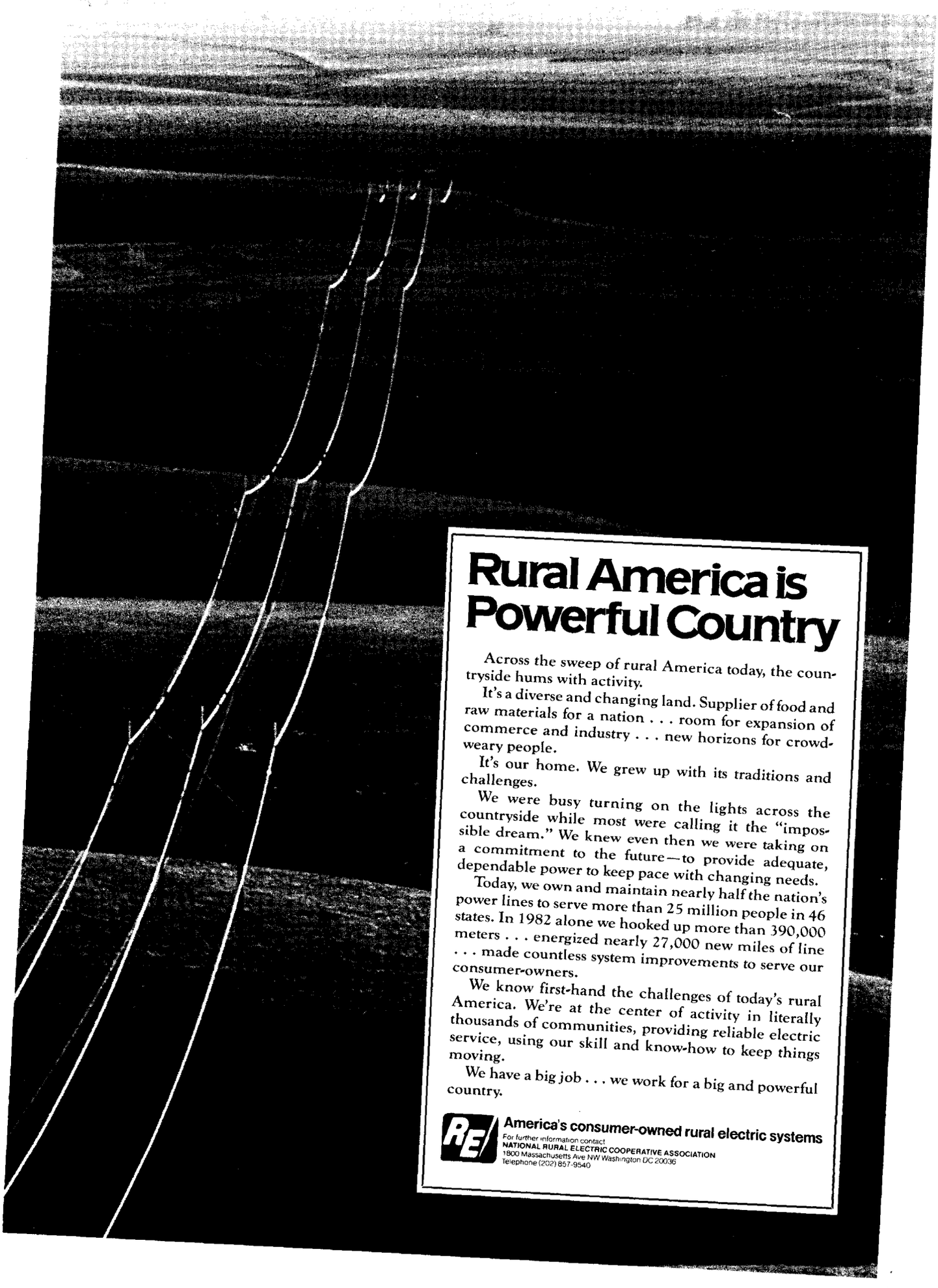

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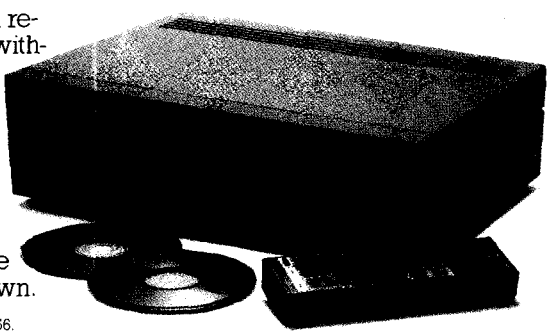

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Cover illustration by Jean-Michel Folon

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1 Rupiah
25 Rupiah
5 Rupiah
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5 Para
5 Pounds
5 Pence
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF MILK

Re John Donahue's "The Political Economy of Milk" (October *Atlantic*):

1) Before cooperatives, the relative bargaining power of dairymen and processors was like that of pre-union laborers and factory owners.

2) The inherent instability in dairy production is due less to seasonal cycles than to the several years required to substantially increase cow numbers. This factor has caused large fluctuations in the unregulated price of beef.

3) The huge surpluses of the past few years are an anomaly in the half-century of regulated marketing, as are the huge tax bill and presumed consumer cost of the program. Government uses mentioned have usually absorbed net Commodity Credit Corporation purchases.

4) The "support price" is a target, of which, despite government purchases, the "order prices" have recently fallen short.

5) In the Northeast, where a minority of dairymen belong to cooperatives (which have long feuded among themselves), "over-order" prices haven't been received. Yet, when the Capper-Volstead provisions were under attack, around 1980, northeastern co-ops lobbied hard to preserve them unchanged, ultimately inducing more western production and exacerbating the surplus problem.

6) The dairy industry looks to promotion rather than price as a means to increase consumption, because milk has largely been replaced as a beverage by soft drinks.

7) Donahue exaggerates the inflation of dairymen's capital costs by the price-support program. For land, building materials, and much machinery, there are enough non-dairying purchasers to maintain market values. Even with high interest rates, the larger dairy farms have produced milk as cheaply as less-capitalized farms. Some dairy farmers have amassed considerable wealth, not because their businesses are highly profitable but because they have used profits to increase capitalization.

8) Many people engage in dairying for noneconomic reasons. Only prolonged, unsustainable losses will force them out. Many would sell out democratic principles and even free-market ideology before they would sell out their cows. Their congressmen respond not only to political pressure and financial inducement but also, I think, to the pathos of bankrupt farms and the broken dreams of dairy-farm families.

SAMUEL C. BEER
Dairy farmer
Angelica, N.Y.

I was a dairy farmer for thirty-four years, until my retirement, and I am proud to have been part of an industry that produces one of nature's most perfect foods. John Donahue's article starts out with two assumptions that are misleading at best. First: the price of milk is too high. Compared with what? A quart of soft drink or beer? The American consumer spends less income on food than almost anyone else in our industrial societies. Our farmers have subsidized the consumer by producing food efficiently and by accepting a small return for their labor. Second: dairy farmers are overpaid. If a dairy farmer were to receive adequate wages for his sixty-five to eighty-five hours a week, fifty-two weeks a year, plus a return on his investment comparable to the return in industry, the price of dairy products would be much higher.

When one minor weapons system, like the target-seeking radar to be installed in airplanes, can cost several billions more than America's entire dairy program, then it is a good feeling to sit on a "glut" of food. We should be thankful to have more than we need.

GEORGE LANDECKER
Barneveld, N.Y.

The major question John Donahue fails to answer is whether the current system is more expensive to the consumer/taxpayer than his proposed "free-market" income-subsidy solution. The author assumes that the purpose of the dairy-price-support system, and the goal of dairy cooperatives, is to keep prices high by disregarding the market forces of supply and demand and have

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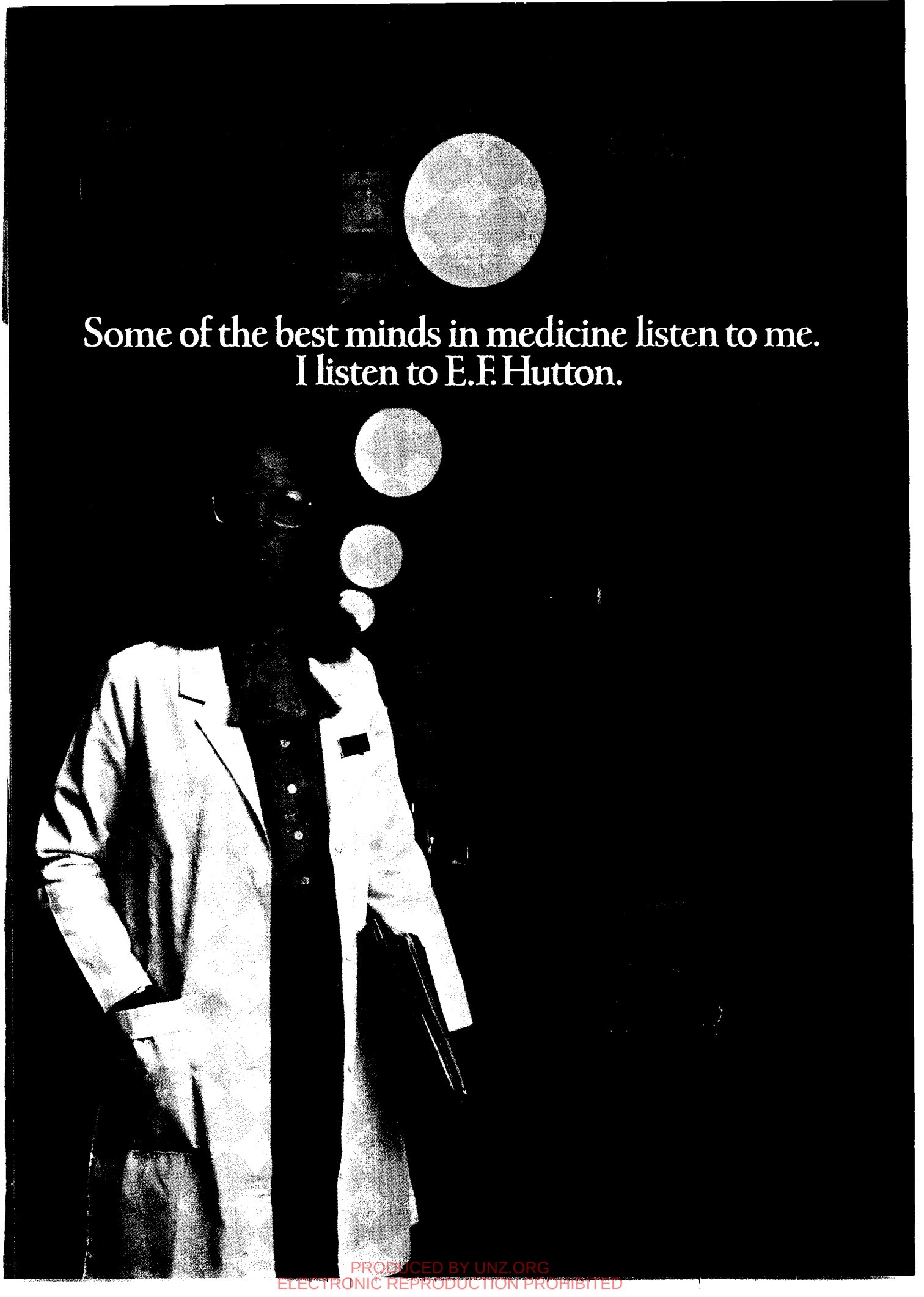

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the government and consumers pick up the tab.

This assumption is wrong. The primary purpose of the price-support program is to ensure a degree of price stability so dairy farmers can make long-run investment decisions that lead to improved efficiency and, ultimately, to lower prices for consumers.

No one is more concerned than the dairy industry about the current costs of the dairy-price-support program. But Donahue misrepresents the industry's proposal for solving the problem. The industry did *not* support the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1982. The program that was supported by the industry has several aspects: 1) an 11.4 percent drop in support prices—if needed to equate supply and demand—which should lower consumer prices; 2) a program that pays producers to cut production but is *paid for by dairy farmers, not taxpayers* (and is thus very different from grain programs); 3) an advertising and education program paid for by dairy farmers.

RICHARD W. STAMMER
Manager of Economics and Communications, Agri-Mark
North Andover, Mass.

John Donahue replies:

The trick to dealing with a controversy as arcane as dairy-policy reform is to give enough detail to cover the topic but not so much as to bore or baffle the general reader. I tried to include the essential and spare readers the esoteric; some correspondents were less satisfied with the attempt than others. Mr. Beer raises some of the more salient complications. Had I addressed them—as I would have in a longer or more specialized piece—the discussion would have been more guarded but fundamentally unchanged.

Mr. Landecker complains that dairymen are underpaid, yet he apparently found the compensation—economic and otherwise—adequate to keep him milking for thirty-four years. This illustrates Mr. Beer's observation on the importance of noneconomic considerations in this issue. Dairy farmers simply like their work, and the appeal of the family farm as a repository of old-fashioned American values makes legislators reluctant to cast any vote that even seems to threaten dairying.

What Dr. Stammer denounces as an unfounded assumption—the wrongheadedness of current dairy programs—was not an assumption at all but a conclusion I sought to support. He is welcome to argue on logical or empirical grounds that I failed to support it adequately, but he does not, in this letter, attempt to do so. In addition, since I didn't mention the dairy industry's reform proposals, I must plead innocent to Dr. Stammer's charge that I misrepresented them.

RAISING KIDS

I read James Q. Wilson's article "Raising Kids" (October *Atlantic*) with great interest but some skepticism. Professor Wilson admits that the progression from brat to delinquent is not automatic, but adds that "it is common." Yet I have known a good many youngsters (aged two to six) whose behavior resembled that of Don as described in the opening paragraphs. These children would "whine, yell, disobey, hit, or shove. . . . any simple request or minor provocation would trigger obscene shouts . . . or assaults on the furniture." Some of these children turned out to be leaders in their schools, respected by teachers and other students for their scholarship and good citizenship. Frankly, I would like to see a thorough study of pre-school aggressive behavior as it relates to later leadership qualities.

I was most skeptical of the value system implicit in the studies Wilson cites. For example, he quotes Donald West as saying that parents of delinquents "failed to enforce or to formulate fixed rules about such things as punctuality, manners, bedtime, television viewing or tidying up." While I have no objection to punctuality or good manners or tidiness, those virtues seem less important than others: curiosity, concern for the welfare of others, taking responsibility for one's own actions. And the Oregon Social Learning Center's insistence on immediate obedience to authority may lead to a vice: blind obedience to authority. That may be preferable to blind disobedience to authority, but reasoned decisions are better than either. I prefer parents who explain requests clearly and simply and who listen to children's responses. That may make for hassles or arguments, but it can also lead to open-minded adults who value reason, evidence, and thorough consideration of issues.

Although there is a lot of good advice in Wilson's article, I fear the value system that underlies that advice. A nation that puts its trust in punctuality, good manners, and tidiness, or a nation that cultivates blind obedience, is indeed a nation at risk. What about creativity, responsibility, concern for others, concern for truth?

RUTH BARTON
Colorado Springs, Colo.

There are no problem children; there are only problem parents. Mr. Wilson's article gives the impression that kids grow up bad and there is little we can do about it except beat them regularly. Children are an easy scapegoat and child abuse is rising steadily and here you are, encouraging a lot of angry and unhappy parents to go ahead and beat up the brat, he deserves it.

Children are not dogs. They should be reared with love, understanding, and freedom to grow up happy and healthy, not trained to obey like some animal.

CHARLES GLASER
New York, N.Y.

Professor Wilson's article implies that the goal of parenting is to obtain the desired behavior at the moment, with evidence it will produce less delinquent behavior in the future. Is that enough? Or is the goal in child-rearing to have the child become a self-determining, cooperative member of society? Rearing children with the latter goal requires more information and skills than those of which Dr. Patterson speaks. Even to set limits appropriately, using Dr. Patterson's model, parents must understand the developmental level and individual characteristics of the child involved. For instance, you cannot apply "time out" to a two-year-old in the same manner you would to a ten-year-old.

If we are advocating a program in parent education, let us make it comprehensive enough to meet the needs of parents, and not once again give them a Band-Aid, implying it will solve their problems.

SALLY SCATTERGOOD
HARRIET HEATH
Education for Parenting
Philadelphia, Pa.

Wilson asks, "Can it be that parents who once knew how to raise children have forgotten?" More to the point is the fact that children have changed. Our children now have seen the entire world by the age of four, through televi-

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sion. They are much more aware of the world than we were. Children see others moving to positions of social equality and respect. Workers demand their rights from employers, minority groups demand equal treatment, women demand equal status. These changes in our culture are reason to rejoice, but our children feel as if they are the only minority group left that has not won its equal place.

In our culture, the biggest insult you can give an adult is to tell him to stop acting like a child. This is a measure of how little respect there is for children in North America. Our children see this, feel resentful, and rebel against autocratic methods of parenting that were obsolete twenty years ago.

One answer is to go beyond mere punishment, which does not work, and develop a system of natural and logical consequences, which does. This is not easy, and takes a lot of explaining and retraining for parents, but the result is more-harmonious families, less-rebellious children, and less crime and disorder.

STEVEN MOORE
Toronto, Ont.

How is it possible for any research or discussion to exist on the subject of "raising kids" without a single mention of building self-esteem by the proper application of approval from parents? I couldn't find the word "love" in this article anywhere.

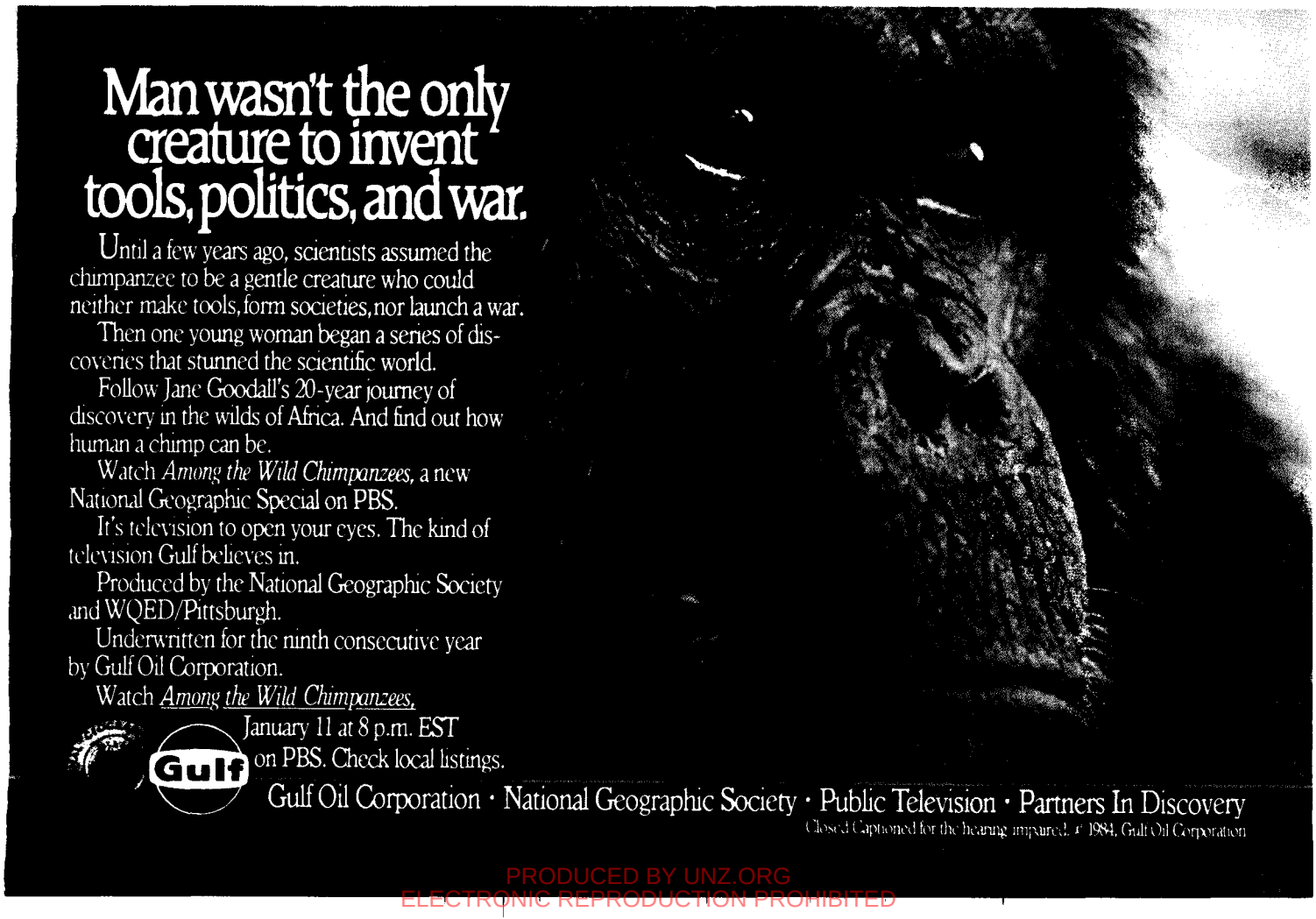
NAT G. HASELTINE
Bakersfield, Calif.

James Q. Wilson replies:

Ruth Barton is right to point out that many rotten children turn out to be decent adults, but I remind her that rotten adults were almost invariably rotten children. And she is right to suggest that ordinarily parents can teach children to be curious, to help others, and even to question authority without risk to the children's development into virtuous adults. But I was not arguing for teaching children "blind obedience to authority"; that is a straw man. I was only recounting how some parents may be unable to teach their children anything—*because these parents literally cannot get the attention of their offspring or alter their behavior in any way—and how some clinicians have managed to reverse this. It is no help to such parents to instruct them in the advantages of curiosity, self-expression, and a critical attitude toward authority. Behavioral therapy does not lead to the creation of automata but to the development of young persons who for the first time can acquire virtues more complex than mere (but necessary) obedience.*

Charles Glaser either did not read my article or, in his haste to respond, forgot what he read. The notion that I urged parents to "beat up the brat" is exactly the opposite of what I wrote. How could Glaser fail to notice this? Perhaps because, though he writes of "love," his mind is filled with hate for anyone he suspects may disagree with him.

Sally Scattergood and Harriet Heath note, correctly, that children differ in their responsiveness to child-rearing techniques (I said this, and now I repeat it) and that we want more from our children than merely the absence of misconduct. But my essay was meant to be not a complete guide to raising children, only an introduction to the methods that may produce a modicum of the decent behavior that is the precondition, espe-



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cially among difficult children, for most other aspects of child development. I was writing about delinquency prevention, a big enough subject by itself, not about everything. Nat Haseltine also should have realized this. Of course self-esteem is important, and of course parental love is essential to building that esteem, but the children about whom I wrote and whom Gerald Patterson is trying to help are those (happily, a small proportion of the total) who, given their present behavior, cannot be reached merely by love or approval. In the book on which I and a co-author are now working, Haseltine will find much about affection.

THE CONDOR

In "The Naked Vulture and the Thinking Ape" (October *Atlantic*), Kenneth Brower asserts that the cooperative efforts of federal, state, and private agencies (including the National Audubon Society) to save the California condor are "badly out of balance." He charges that the recovery program overemphasizes captive breeding and radio tracking while it ignores more important measures.

I believe that it is Mr. Brower's report that lacks balance. And his contention that the condor population is suffering *because* of our efforts is simply false.

According to the annual census just completed by the recovery team, the remnant flock of wild California condors now numbers at least twenty birds. This is the first time in recent years that the *wild* population did not decline. This was also a year in which the new *captive* condor flock was increased by 300 percent—from two birds in 1982 to eight birds in 1983. When a species is as close to extinction as this one, an increase of this magnitude is very good news indeed.

The dramatic buildup of the captive flock, with no corresponding diminution of the wild flock, is largely due to a reproductive phenomenon known as "replacement clutching"—the condor's tendency to produce a second and even a third egg to replace those removed by the recovery team to bolster the captive population.

Release of captive condors to augment the wild population could begin as early as 1985. By 1990, the captive flock should start to breed. Our hope is to release ten to fifteen birds each year during the 1990s.

Mr. Brower challenges our radio telemetry work—which requires that a tiny transmitter be attached to the wing of a wild condor—on what seems to be aesthetic and sentimental grounds. Granted, it would be preferable if no handling or tagging were necessary. But radio telemetry, which has been widely used in recent years to help restore other endangered avian species, does not in any way harm the birds. And we have learned more about the condor's habitat needs from radio tracking in the past twelve months than we learned from the previous fifty years of field study.

Mr. Brower claims that we have neglected other essential steps in protecting the condor, particularly the need to safeguard the bird's natural habitat. He is mistaken. National Audubon has been working to save condor habitat since the 1930s, when the first condor sanctuary was established. This past September, we were able to persuade Congress to appropriate funds to acquire, from a land-development company, an 11,000-acre tract that our condor biologists recently identified as a principal foraging area for the flock.

Mr. Brower and other critics of the recovery program have suggested that the California condor's time may have come—and that perhaps we should let this ancient species exit gracefully without subjecting it to the indignities of handling, radio-tagging, and (for some) captivity.

The other view, which Audubon shares, holds that it was man's carelessness and destructive intervention over the past century that drove the great bird to the brink of extinction. Therefore it is our obligation to restore, through *positive* intervention, the last wild flock of California condors to a self-sustaining level while there are still enough birds to do so.

RUSSELL W. PETERSON
President, National Audubon Society
New York, N.Y.

Kenneth Brower replies:

In the public meetings on the condor that I have attended, the division between ornithologists on the matter of captive breeding has been about fifty-fifty. One of those most firmly opposed was the late Carl Koford, whom National Audubon, Dr. Peterson's society, selected to do its early condor studies. Dr. Koford's book on condors remains condorology's bible. Coming away from an interview with Koford, I invariably had a fine feel for what a condor is. I could see the bird, though at that time I had never actually set eyes on one. Coming away from my interviews with the biotechnicians who have succeeded Koford, I invariably had a fine feel for the miniaturized radio transmitter. There was no bird there.

Yes, there was a 300 percent increase in the number of captive condors last year, but the credit is due wild condors, not the men who took their eggs. There is no reason to believe that those wild eggs would not have fared as well under their parents as they did under incubator lights.

Dr. Peterson's "tiny" transmitter has an eight-inch antenna, a solar-powered transmitting unit on the upper surface of the wing, a battery-powered back-up unit on the lower, and plastic flaps covering them. The 11,000 acres he mentions is the Hudson Ranch. That the ranch is a principal foraging area for condors is not, as he claims, a recent discovery by condor biologists—it is a fact long known. It was discovered not by solar-powered transmitters but by a far more convenient instrument, cornea of cowboy, powered by beans and beer.

Dr. Peterson speaks of positive intervention. There is a chasm between good intentions and good interventions, and the men of the Condor Research Center have not always made it across. Their trial flight, launched with the best of intentions, ended with the death by overhandling of the 1980 chick. Their new intentions are appalling. Their latest proposal is to take the first, second, and third eggs from each of the five breeding pairs. (This summer they discovered that a condor is capable of triple-clutching if you remove her first two eggs, and they now want any third eggs, too.) They propose to capture the nestling that resulted from the 1983 triple-clutching—the one new recruit they have, through oversight, left to the wild population—and they propose to capture three adults as well, bringing the wild population down from twenty to sixteen. They have yet to return a single bird to the wild successfully, and there is no guarantee that they can do so. They are decimating the wild condor flock in order to save it. The greatest threat to condor survival is the condor recovery program. Its architects are well on the way to ushering out Gymnogyps californianus *and ushering in* Gymnogyps domesticus.

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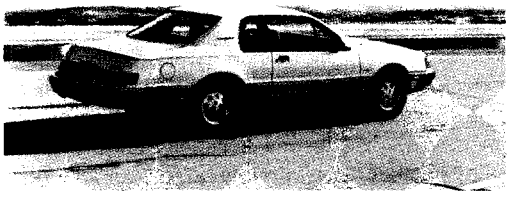

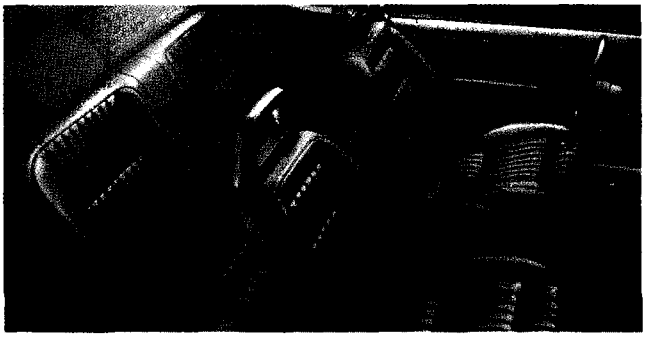

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REPORTS & COMMENT

BUENOS AIRES

THE WEIGHT OF THE PAST

Argentina's new civilian president must start work on a long, inherited agenda before he can draw up his own

MOST ARGENTINES FIND it difficult to feel optimistic about their future. This should be a heady, hopeful time. After nearly eight years of military misrule—a contemptible era marked by the military's murder of thousands of civilians and by its foolish and humiliating adventure in the Falklands—the country is returning to civilian government. Yet, though there were celebrations over the defeat of Peronism and the election of Raúl Alfonsín as president, the mood is made sober by the intractability of Argentina's problems. The feeling of transformation experienced by Spain as it moved step by step from Francoism to democracy does not exist in Argentina.

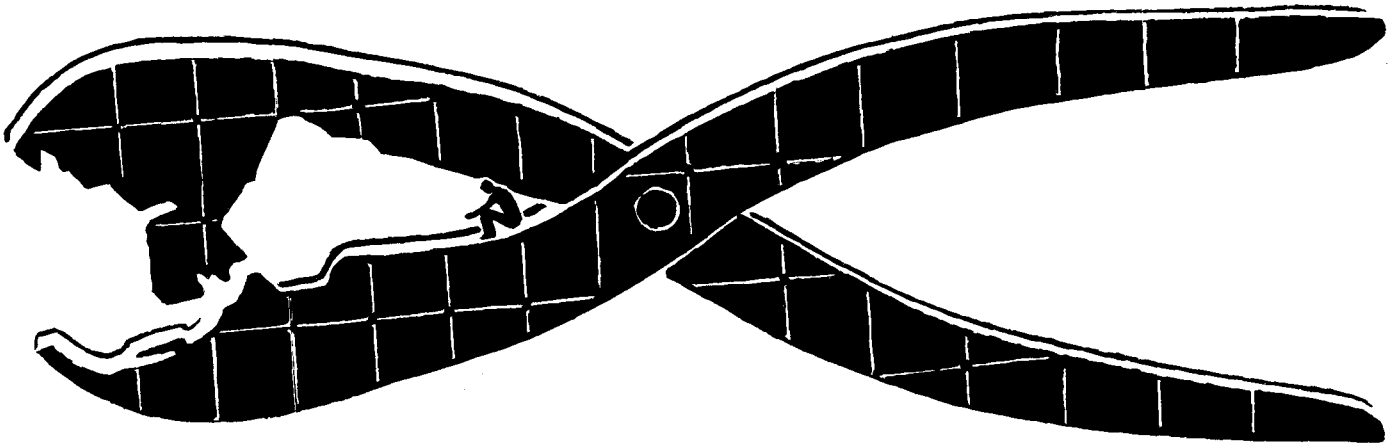
The victory last October of Alfonsín, a fifty-seven-year-old former congressman from the leftist wing of the middle-class Radical Civic Union, marked the first time that the Peronists had lost a presidential election. Many analysts believe that the defeat marks the end of the Peronist movement in Argentine politics. The wonder is not that Peronism may disappear but that it has lingered so long: the Peronists were so out of date that they used slogans reminiscent of Perón's first elections, denouncing Alfonsín as "the Coca-Cola candidate" and proclaiming that the issue was "General Perón or General Motors." Alfonsín, however, can hardly be considered close to the United States, particularly the Reagan Administration. In an interview just after the Falklands war, Alfonsín accused the United States of supporting fascism in Argentina for many years and of working against democratic forces.

As the first civilian president of Argentina in eight years, Alfonsín faces a formidable task, especially in trying to deal with a deteriorating economy and opposition from powerful labor unions that are still run by Peronists.

In a country that can feed many times more than its 28 million people and that has enough oil of its own to power all of its industry, the degree of the economic hardship defies logic. Inflation in October was running at an annual rate of 1,000 percent. Costs soar so quickly that if you order cold cuts on Thursday for a party on Saturday, the grocer will not commit himself to a price. Until the government last June created a new peso that was equivalent to 10,000 old pesos, a mother would have to stuff tens of thousands of pesos into a child's pocket to buy a few candy bars. Dinner for two cost a million.

The society is pervaded by the fever of speculation. Children try to persuade their grandmothers to buy them toys today with the argument that the price will go up tomorrow. Almost everyone puts his money into a bank account with a one-week term; banks, whose astronomical interest rates chase inflation, are looked on as houses of gambling rather than of savings.

There has been no growth in the economy for a decade. The foreign debt is nearly $40 billion, unemployment is



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more than 20 percent, and underemployment is 30 percent. (The underemployed are defined as those who work no more than an hour a day.) In a society once proud of living easily off its riches, men make ends meet by digging up earthworms and selling them to Sunday fishermen along the Rio de la Plata in Buenos Aires.

In the past hard years, the military government managed to spend billions on armaments while imposing severe restraints on the country. When the restraints failed drastically, the officers rushed from problem to problem with stopgap measures. The job of putting together a rational economic program was left to their successors.

STATISTICS CLASSIFY Argentina as a Third World country, crushed under one of the world's largest and most dangerous foreign debts. It is laughable now even to think of inviting Argentina to join the United States, Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Japan, and Canada in the annual economic summit of the industrialized countries of the world.

Yet a half-century ago, Argentina's per capita GNP was twice as high as Italy's and only thirty dollars a year less than France's; its total GNP was greater than that of Canada. Argentina, by virtue of its culture and history and, to some extent, riches, regarded itself as a rightful though junior rival to the United States for influence over the Western Hemisphere. Rich and confident, European in both outlook and background, Argentina expected to be counted with the Anglo-Saxon dominions of the British Empire, like Canada and Australia, not with the Indian–white societies of Latin America, like Mexico and Peru.

The precipitous fall in fifty years of so rich a country remains one of the mysteries of modern history and politics. At their most frustrated and cynical, some foreigners living in Argentina say that the land suffered neglect and pillage because it was populated by the peasant trash of Spain and Italy. It is a glib and foolish theory. Yet even thoughtful analysts blame much of the strange malaise of modern Argentina on a flaw of character in the Argentine people. These analysts believe that Argentine rapacity plundered the land for its wealth.

The failure of Argentina comes in reality out of a whole series of selfish decisions, false starts, and historical accidents. The Argentines have headed in the wrong direction many times in the past half-century, and there is no evidence that they have learned enough to head in the right one now.

One problem lies at the heart of all the others: in a land almost as vast as India, more than a third of the population clusters in one city, Buenos Aires. The wealth has always clustered there too. Under the economic domination of Britain—from Argentina's independence from Spain, in 1816, until the Second World War—Argentina developed an economy serving rich Argentines and British merchants. The fertile pampas around Buenos Aires produced the beef, hides, wool, and grain that made Argentina rich earlier in this century, and the port lived off the pampas, shipping these commodities to Britain and taking manufactured goods in exchange.

For years, the establishment that ruled Buenos Aires looked toward Europe instead of toward the rest of Argentina. Many Argentines did not even bother to remain at home: between the two world wars, a hundred thousand of them lived in Paris. While Europe attracted rich Argentines, Argentina attracted poor Europeans. From the turn of the century onward, waves of Italian and Spanish immigrants came to work the land. The elite made these immigrants and their children feel like outsiders. The deep division that developed between the elite and the poor led to the yearning for unity and redress of social injustice that helped make Argentina susceptible to the fascist and nationalist rhetoric of Juan Perón.

It had always been easy for the rich of Buenos Aires to rake in profits. From their huge estates on the pampas, they earned enormous amounts of cash quickly, spent conspicuously, and invested little within Argentina. The lack of investment crippled industrialization. When Perón came to power, he still had time to turn the economic system around. But doing so did not seem necessary. Enriched by a wartime and postwar Europe desperate for food, Argentina had the illusion of endless wealth.

Instead of restructuring the economy to encourage industrialization, Perón sought to build new industries using only the profits from exporting the products of the pampas (all producers were made to export through the government). When prices dropped, Perón began to print money, starting an inflation that has never stopped. In the end, he did no

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more for the economy of Argentina than give the poor a larger piece of a shrinking pie, by strengthening the labor unions. The old formula never changed. Argentina is still a country of huge landholdings whose riches are concentrated in the Buenos Aires region. But no one calls it a rich country anymore.

THE PHENOMENON OF Perón both reflected and exacerbated the ills of the society. Elected president in 1946, in one of the cleanest elections in Argentine history, he manipulated his people with charisma and authority and with the sainthood he created for Evita—as if those things could solve their problems. Yet his hold on many of them has lasted nearly four decades. The longing for the intoxicating optimism of the Perón era, when the Argentines were deluded into believing that their country was significant on the world stage and that their leaders fought for justice, has compounded the difficulty of coping with the aftermath in any realistic way.

The Perón era underscored the open relationship in Argentina between militarism and politics. With no true democratic tradition and no confidence in government, the Argentines have long accepted and even encouraged attempts by the military to pull the country out of the political and economic morass. The establishment has found it easier to call on the army than to organize a conservative party for political influence. Since 1930, all but eight of Argentina's twenty-four presidents have been generals. During the past fifty years, the armed forces have mounted fourteen successful coups, six against civilian politicians and eight against military presidents. Even Jacobo Timerman, the former Argentine newspaper editor who is one of the best-known victims of military tyranny, was in favor of the 1976 military coup, which he hoped would cleanse Argentina of the inept and corrupt rule of Perón's widow.

The problems of Argentina are compounded by geography: the Argentines regard themselves as more European than Latin American, but they are so far removed from their roots and their models that they live in a remote, suffocating world. The ignorance of world affairs that the military rulers of Argentina displayed during the Second World War was appalling, no matter how swayed they were by their Italian ancestry, no matter how loyal they felt to the German officers who had trained them. They hurt their country badly by remaining neutral until 1945, declaring war on Nazi Germany only weeks before it was defeated. Many Argentine scholars think that Britain preferred that Argentina remain neutral so that its ships could supply Britain with meat throughout the war. Even if they are right, neutrality was foolish, because it enraged the United States, beginning an enmity that lasted for years and kept out American economic and military assistance until the fall of Perón, in 1955.

Although Peronism may have had more similarities to Huey Long's "soak the rich" populism than to Mussolini's fascism, it had enough fascist trappings to shock a world that had just survived a war brought on by leaders in the same mold as Perón. But the Argentines had an outlook so unrealistic that they could act as if Hitler, Mussolini, and the Second World War had never existed.

The Argentine penchant for self-delusion led to the two miscalculations that brought on the Falklands war in 1982: General Leopoldo Galtieri and the junta were convinced that Britain would never fight, and that if by some remote chance it did, the United States would never support Britain.

The miscalculation about the Americans was not as absurd to Argentines as it seems now to us. Argentina, at the request of the Reagan Administration, had financed and trained many of the anti-Sandinista guerrillas who were preparing to attack Nicaragua from bases in Honduras. Its readiness to serve as a secret surrogate imperial power, a role dropped after the United States sided with Britain in the Falklands war, enabled the Reagan Administration to avoid major conflicts with Congress over covert operations in Nicaragua. It was predictable that Galtieri would overestimate the importance of his service.

That is probably why Galtieri would not take seriously a call from President Reagan on the eve of the Falklands invasion asking him to stop it. A U.S. diplomat then in Buenos Aires who read a summary of the call says that Reagan was not as forceful as Administration officials liked to pretend at the time. The call, in fact, was dismissed by Galtieri in a joking way. "Are you worried about the eighteen hundred kelpers?" he asked President Reagan, according to the diplomat. ("Kelpers" is a nickname for residents of the Falklands.) "If you are, I can send them to you."

On the first anniversary of his invasion of the Falklands, General Galtieri, already deposed as president, told the Buenos Aires newspaper *Clarin* that he had regarded himself as "the pampered child of the North Americans" in those days. "If I had known the Americans would take the position they finally adopted," he said, "we would never have invaded."

THE NEW CIVILIAN government will have a great deal of difficulty trying to create confidence in both the economy and the political system. They must also deal somehow with the terrible calamity of the *desaparecidos*, or "disappeared ones." For almost a decade, the military government sent its secret agents to kidnap, torture, and murder people—thousands of them—it suspected of subversion and dissidence. The professed targets were Trotskyist guerrillas and extreme Peronist guerrillas, known as Montoneros, but the army took advantage of its mission and repressed a broad segment of the left. The government has never accepted responsibility for the deaths or even given up the bodies. Analysts estimate that at least 6,000 and perhaps as many as 30,000 Argentines were gunned down or made to "disappear."

Before stepping down, the military junta issued a brazen report on the *desaparecidos*, which admitted only that a few "mistakes" had been committed in the course of the righteous struggle against guerrillas. The junta also ignored protest demonstrations and issued a decree granting itself and its troops amnesty for all crimes committed during its rule. The officers obviously wanted to prevent any attempts to make them account for their actions or to take revenge on them.

Buenos Aires is still a city of sophistication, elegance, and creativity, but an outsider who comes to Argentina cannot help feeling sympathy for the middle class, whose members are the most obvious victims of the Argentine failure. Many are the descendants of Italian and Spanish workers who arrived seventy-five or a hundred years ago to work out better lives for themselves. In most other countries, these middle-class citizens would be the backbone of democracy, but here they feel desperate, buffeted, and powerless. They try to hide their impotence with a bravado and an aggression that can be easily manipu-

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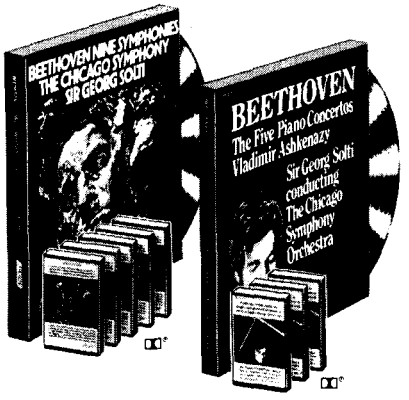

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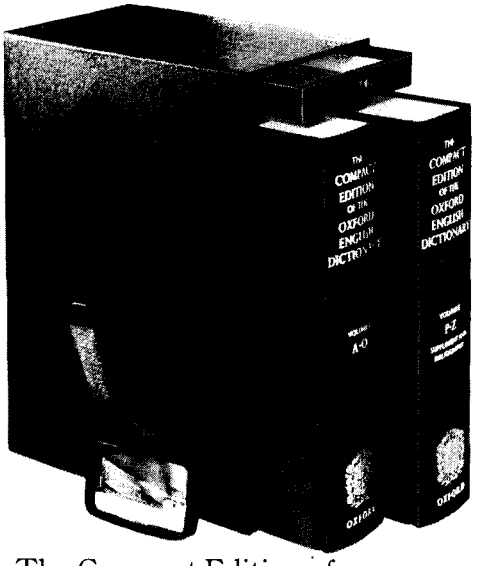

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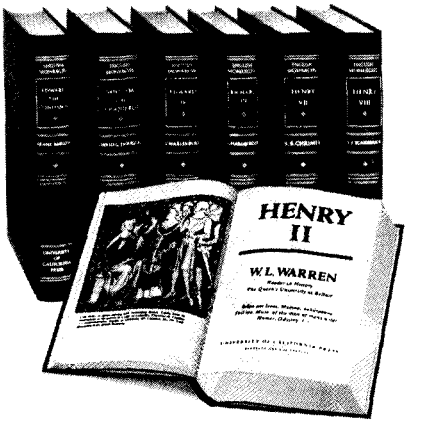

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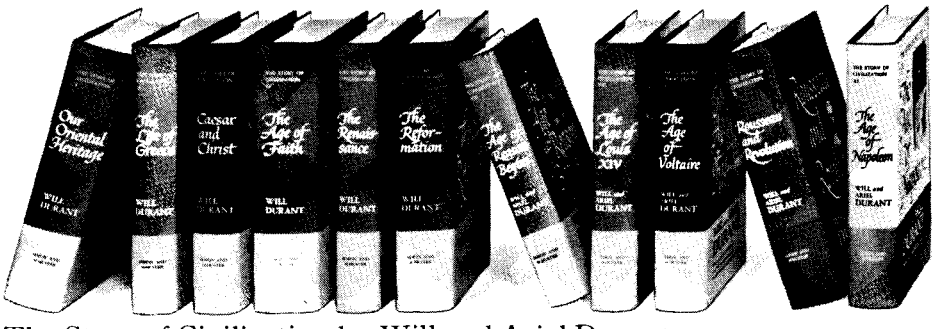

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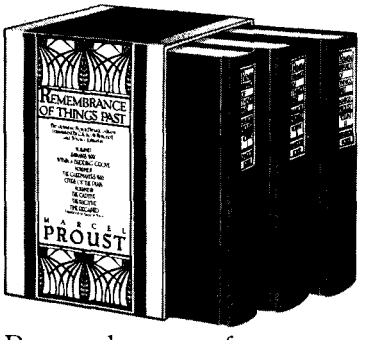

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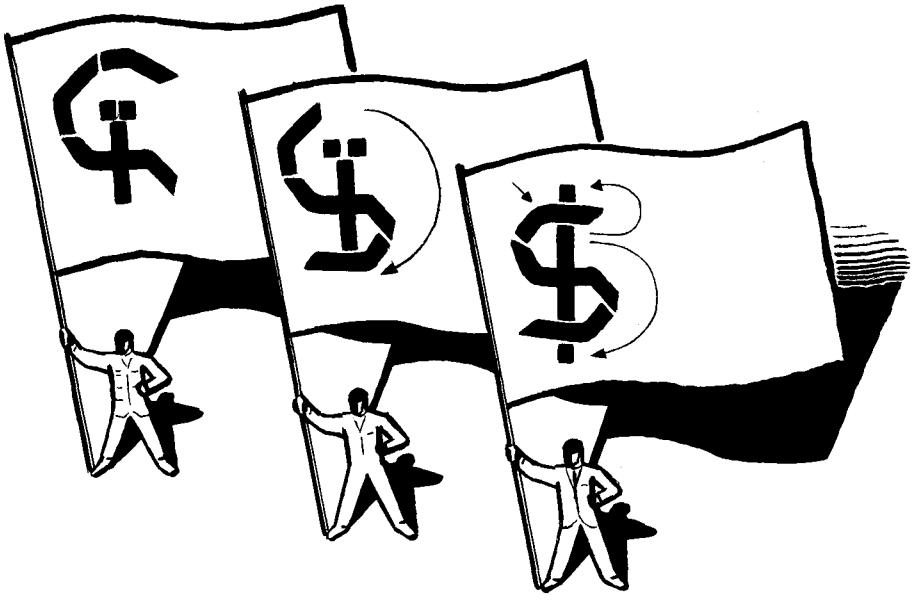
lated into a foolish, fervent nationalism. They spend much and save little.

Perhaps they have only themselves to blame. For years, millions of Argentines voted for Peronism, refused to protest policies that seemed wrong, and accepted military takeover as the natural alternative to poor civilian government. The election of Alfonsín, an honest, warm, and democratic leader who relies on thoughtful advisers, is a first step in the right direction. Yet the problems he faces—reviving the economy, keeping the military out of politics, baring the truth about the *desaparecidos* and punishing the guilty, repairing relations with Britain—are so difficult that he is likely to fail more often than he succeeds in the months ahead. The question is whether the Argentines will simply turn their backs on democracy, as they have done so often in the past, if Alfonsín falters.

—*Elizabeth Fox and Stanley Meisler*

Elizabeth Fox is the Buenos Aires representative of Canada's International Development Research Center. Stanley Meisler is a foreign correspondent of the Los Angeles Times.



THE CONGO

WESTERN INVESTORS NOW WELCOME

A twenty-year experiment with "scientific socialism" appears in many respects to have failed

MENTION THE CONGO, and most people think of the former Belgian Congo, Conrad's Heart of Darkness, the vast, mineral-rich land that is present-day Zaire. Yet just across the Congo River lies "another" Congo, the small but strategically located People's Republic of the Congo, a former French colony, where one of black Africa's more interesting political and economic evolutions is under way.

In 1963, three years after winning its independence from France, this Central African country of 1.6 million, which lies between Gabon and Zaire and borders on the oil-rich Angolan province of Cabinda, became the first African country to proclaim a "Marxist orientation" and sign a military-cooperation treaty with the Soviet Union. Two years later, the United States and Great Britain closed their embassies. As foreign-owned companies were nationalized, Western investors left, and Cuba began using the Congo as a conduit for arms to Angola. So many Chinese arrived, ostensibly to complete construction projects, that alarmed neighbors accused the Congo of helping foreign powers to "destabilize Africa."

After twenty years of "scientific socialism," the People's Republic of the Congo is making public the extent to which many of its socialist experiments have failed. Behind an elaborate façade of Marxist rhetoric, President Denis Sassou-Nguesso, forty, a handsome, French-educated man whose three-piece suits are so well cut that the French press calls him the "Marxist dressed by Cardin," is carrying out a carefully orchestrated rapprochement with the West. The country that was once hard-line enough to be called the "Albania of Africa" appears to be switching allegiance from Marx to Adam Smith.

In Brazzaville, the capital, a sleepy city with sand-gouged streets, portraits of Marx and Lenin vie for space with Mercedes ads, and grocery stores are stocked with foie gras and champagne. Streets are lined with late-model Toyotas, and the nouvelle cuisine at the Arc-en-Ciel would surely rate two stars from Michelin if the restaurant were in Paris. A few Congolese even wear shirts printed with dollar signs.

The about-face began in 1979, when Sassou-Nguesso, a colonel in the Congolese Army, came to power. Sassou-Nguesso reversed the trend that had begun in 1963, when the Congo's first socialist president, Alphonse Massamba-Debat, jettisoned the democratic government that had been in place since independence, adopted a policy of "scientific socialism," and established a single-party state. The regime did not, however, become militantly Marxist until the 1968 coup d'état led by Marien Ngouabi, a popular captain in the parachutist corps, who ruled from 1968 until his mysterious murder, in 1977. During Ngouabi's term in office, the Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville), as the French colony of Middle Congo had been known since its independence, became the People's Republic of the Congo. The Congolese Labor Party, which had been founded by Ngouabi, became the country's only political party, and the Congo adopted a red flag inscribed with a crossed hammer and hoe.

Cumbersome state farms and newly nationalized state companies, directed by tripartite committees of workers, managers, and party members (the "*trilogie déterminante*"), were set up according to the standard Eastern-bloc model. Soon mismanagement, lack of discipline, and overstaffing had disastrous effects on production. Sugar output at the Suco sugar plantation, nationalized in 1970, fell from a record 100,000 tons in 1968 to 5,700 tons a decade later. In 1977, the Suco refinery shut down, forcing the Congo, once a large-scale sugar exporter, to import sugar for domestic needs. Under the French, who had ruled the Congo since the 1880s, the Niari Valley had regularly produced

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PAC Americana

Before 1972 it was perfectly legal for a candidate for office to accept a campaign contribution of any amount without disclosing the amount or source of the money. It was an era of millionaire contributors, "laundered money," and large cash campaign transactions.

Campaign financing was badly in need of reform. And reform came—first, with the Federal Election Campaign Act, which went into effect in 1972, and then with subsequent laws that grew out of Watergate-related investigations. These laws cleaned up the system. They required disclosure of political funding, established limits on contributions to candidates for federal office, and reformed the rules under which people could group together under political action committees.

Popularly called PACs, these committees are voluntary associations of like-minded individuals who contribute to a joint campaign fund. They do so in the hope of increasing their effectiveness with issues and candidates they care about. There are PACs for labor, business, civil rights, the elderly, professional, environmental and consumer groups, and many other groups. Joining a PAC is one way people have of exercising their freedom of speech.

The federal government has established very strict restrictions for all PACs, particularly for corporate PACs. These restrictions have been observed. There's not been a single scandal involving a corporate PAC since the campaign financing reforms of the 1970s paved the way for the growth of PACs.

Despite this impressive record, PACs have come under criticism. The core of the argument against them is that they exert too much influence in the political process.

Actually PACs contribute less than one-fourth of the total of federal election costs and corporate PACs account for only 8% of those costs. The average corporate PAC contribution to a candidate for federal office in 1981-82 was $657. The average cost of that candidate's campaign was in excess of $500,000.

PACs are scarcely the dominant factor in campaigns that they are accused of being. One assumes that PACs exert some influence. Otherwise people would not join them. But "too much" influence? With 8%? Hardly!

PACs are people. What influence people exert through PACs has been at the expense of the monied interests who did dominate the political process before the reforms of the 1970's created the modern PAC. By accumulating contributions from donors, many of whom never gave before, PACs have brought more Americans into the political process. This represents a welcome shift toward the grassroots. The people who give to PACs are more likely to take an interest in campaigns and to vote. The additional money they bring to campaigns increases competition for office and the quality of the campaigns.

"Those who expect to reap the blessing of freedom," Thomas Paine wrote, "must . . . undergo the fatigue of supporting it."

UNITED TECHNOLOGIES

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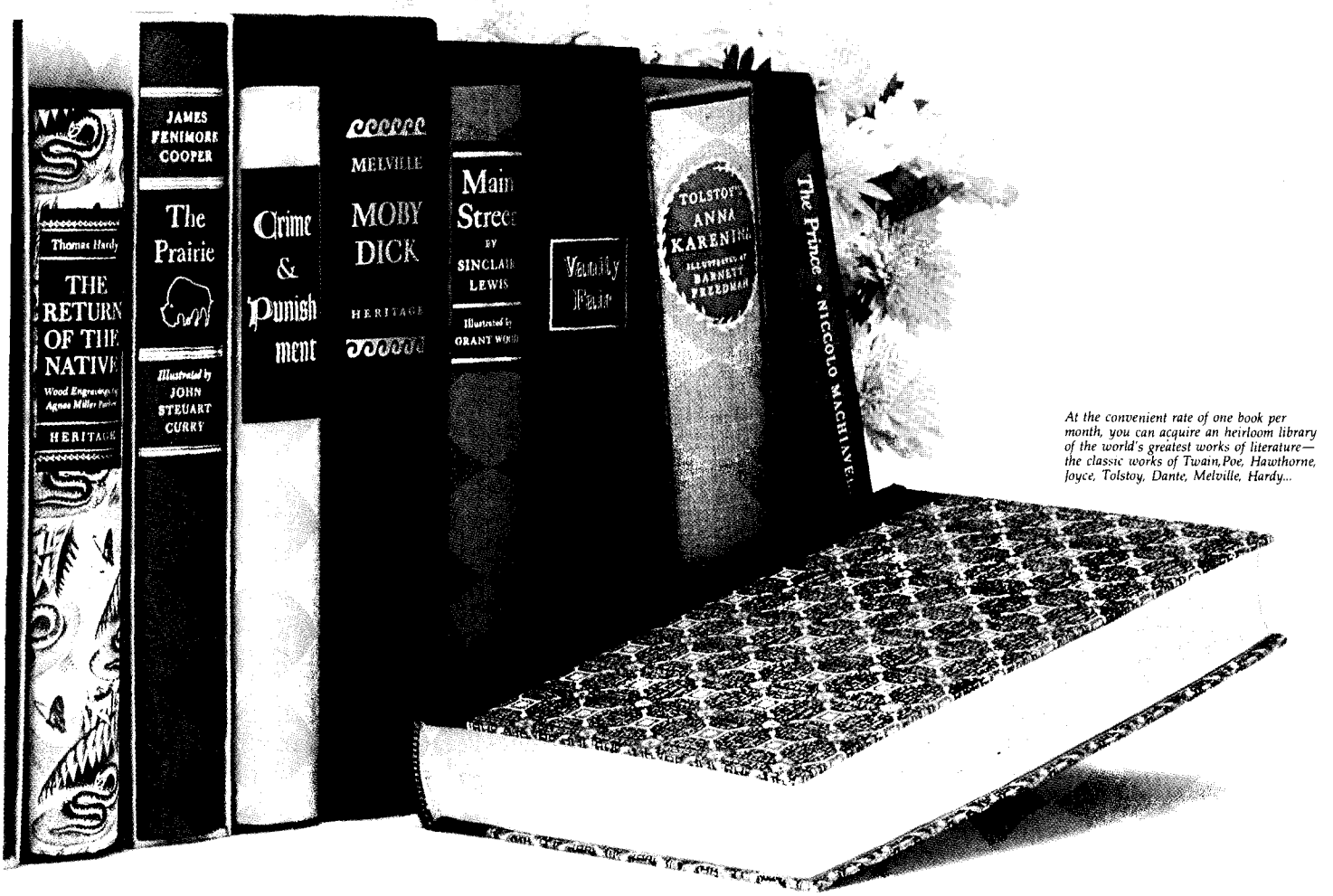

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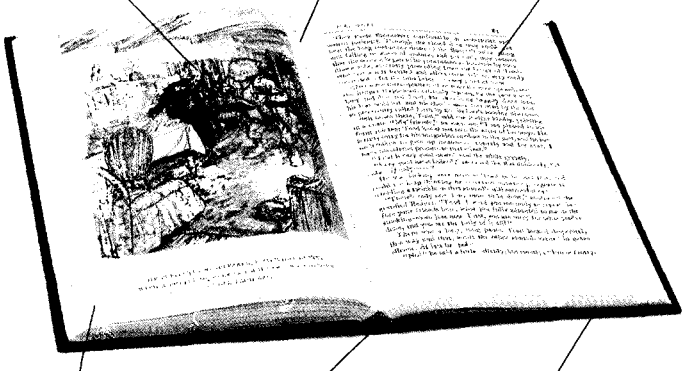

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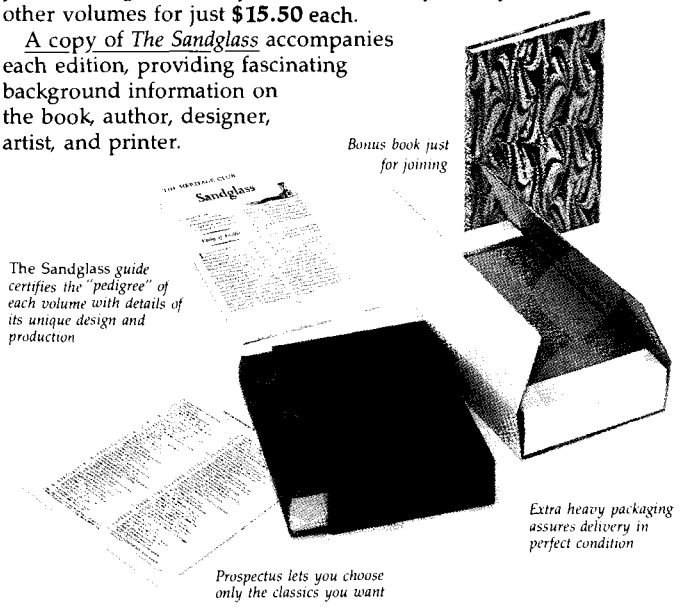

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large harvests of such lucrative export crops as coffee, cocoa, palm oil, peanuts, and tobacco. But artificially low government-controlled prices, a characteristic of Eastern-bloc economics, soon discouraged the private farmers, who account for 70 percent of the Congo's agricultural production. As groves went uncared for, citrus and banana production fell. Peanut-oil plants had to close because the few peasants who continued to grow peanuts sold them on the black market for twice the government-controlled price. Also in decline were exports of tropical hardwoods from the equatorial forest that covers two thirds of the Congo.

Without maintenance, the Congo-Océan Railway—the sole link between Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire, which is the country's only port, some 250 miles away—began to fall apart. By 1979, state companies had accumulated a debt of 88 billion CFA francs, or $225 million. (The Congo, along with Chad, Cameroon, Gabon, and the Central African Republic, is a member of a five-nation franc zone whose common currency, the CFA franc, is backed by the French treasury and pinned to the French franc at a rate of fifty to one.) State farms were such a failure that food imports were costing the Congo $48 million a year. The country still had only 300 miles of paved roads. Oil revenues, from deposits discovered in 1957, helped delay collapse by offsetting the deficits. However, when disputes with foreign operating companies over taxes led to a drop in production (the 1975–1977 output was projected at 14 million tons, but only 6 million were produced), the government was forced to scale down ambitious development plans. Ngouabi blamed the oil companies and vowed to "get the foreign opportunists who had sabotaged the Congo's future."

Shortly after this proclamation, he was assassinated, under circumstances that are still unclear (five days later, the Archbishop of Brazzaville, the last person to have seen Ngouabi alive, was also killed). In 1979, the Central Committee deposed Ngouabi's successor, General Yhombi-Opango, and imprisoned him for corruption (he is still under house arrest); it elected Sassou-Nguesso, then vice president, to succeed him. Educated at France's national school for noncommissioned officers, at St. Maixent, Sassou-Nguesso had a reputation as a militant Marxist. He had served as the minister of defense under Ngouabi and Yhombi-Opango, and had been one of four men whom Ngouabi had chosen to serve on a committee for the "radicalization of the revolution."

Surprisingly, Sassou-Nguesso immediately set about wooing the Western investors who had been alienated by Ngouabi's policies. In a dramatic reversal of the 1972 Second Party Congress, which had listed "elimination of the private foreign sector" as one of its aims, Sassou-Nguesso assured private investors that no further nationalizations or Draconian taxes on private enterprise were planned. Moreover, he has soothed qualms about the Congo's continuing ties with the Soviet Union and Cuba by stating that the Congo has no wish to "export its ideology" or to serve as a "base for the destabilization of Africa." Shortly after he came to power, Sassou-Nguesso expressed a desire for "increased cooperation with the petroleum industry." As a result of his overtures to French and Italian operating companies, the Congo today is black Africa's fourth largest oil producer, after Nigeria, Gabon, and Angola.

The increase in oil production improved the Congo's economic position considerably; from 1978 to 1982, the country increased its trade surplus from $16 million to $250 million, and oil currently accounts for 88 percent of the country's foreign-exchange earnings. Production in 1982 was 4.3 million tons, one and a half times the 1979 total, and was largely responsible for the Congo's $1,200 per capita annual income, high by African standards. Soon after Sassou-Nguesso took over power, accreditation was granted to the first American ambassador to the Congo in fourteen years.

The edging away from the East is most pronounced in the economic sphere. Inefficient state companies—whose debts are still the biggest drag on the economy—are being broken up and told to pay their way, and nine will soon be closed. In a major departure from the socialist practice of putting full employment ahead of profits, the government recently laid off 760 workers at the Suco sugar plantation. This year, the tripartite management committees in twelve state companies will be replaced by capitalist-style corporation heads who will have the power to hire and fire. During a recent visit by Western journalists, Congolese officials were surprisingly eager to go on the record with detailed assessments of socialist experiments that have failed. "The *trilogie déterminante* does not work," Jean Itadi, the minister of industry, said bluntly. "We are like invalids," said Emmanuel Yoka, the minister responsible for foreign aid, and one of the men closest to the President. He continued, "We are walking on crutches and we need help to stand alone." In a televised speech on April 30, the eve of the Communist Labor Day holiday, Sassou-Nguesso emphasized the need for Western-style management. "He even scolded state-company employees for arriving late, when private-sector employees get there on time," says an amazed oil-company executive. Since the speech, a West German has been brought in to help manage the state cement factory and a Frenchman has been made director of the Impreco textile factory.

The Congo has stopped trying to bail out the state farms set up by Ngouabi—"They are a disaster," Marius Mouambenga, the minister of agriculture, says. Most seed and machinery and the largest share of available credit are now being directed to the private sector. Food prices are slowly being raised in an effort to stimulate production.

THOUGH THE CONGO is still a one-party state, the political climate is more relaxed than it was during the days when Congolese leaders kept the jails filled with their political rivals, or when the body of Ange Diawara, who had attempted a coup against Ngouabi, was paraded through the streets of Brazzaville. In 1979, the Congolese voted for a new constitution and elected members of a national assembly. Censorship of reporting from the Congo by foreign journalists has stopped, and the government-controlled local press occasionally runs surprisingly critical editorials. Bent on making peace internally as well as externally, Sassou-Nguesso has made overtures to the country's often persecuted Catholic minority—Pope John Paul II received one of the warmest welcomes of his 1980 African tour in this once officially atheistic country—and he has allowed a small opposition group to erect a statue of its founder, André Matswa.

One indication of the change in atmosphere is the messages on the red billboards scattered around Brazzaville. In the past they warned of "imperialist saboteurs"; today they denounce selfishness, sloth, and lack of discipline, which

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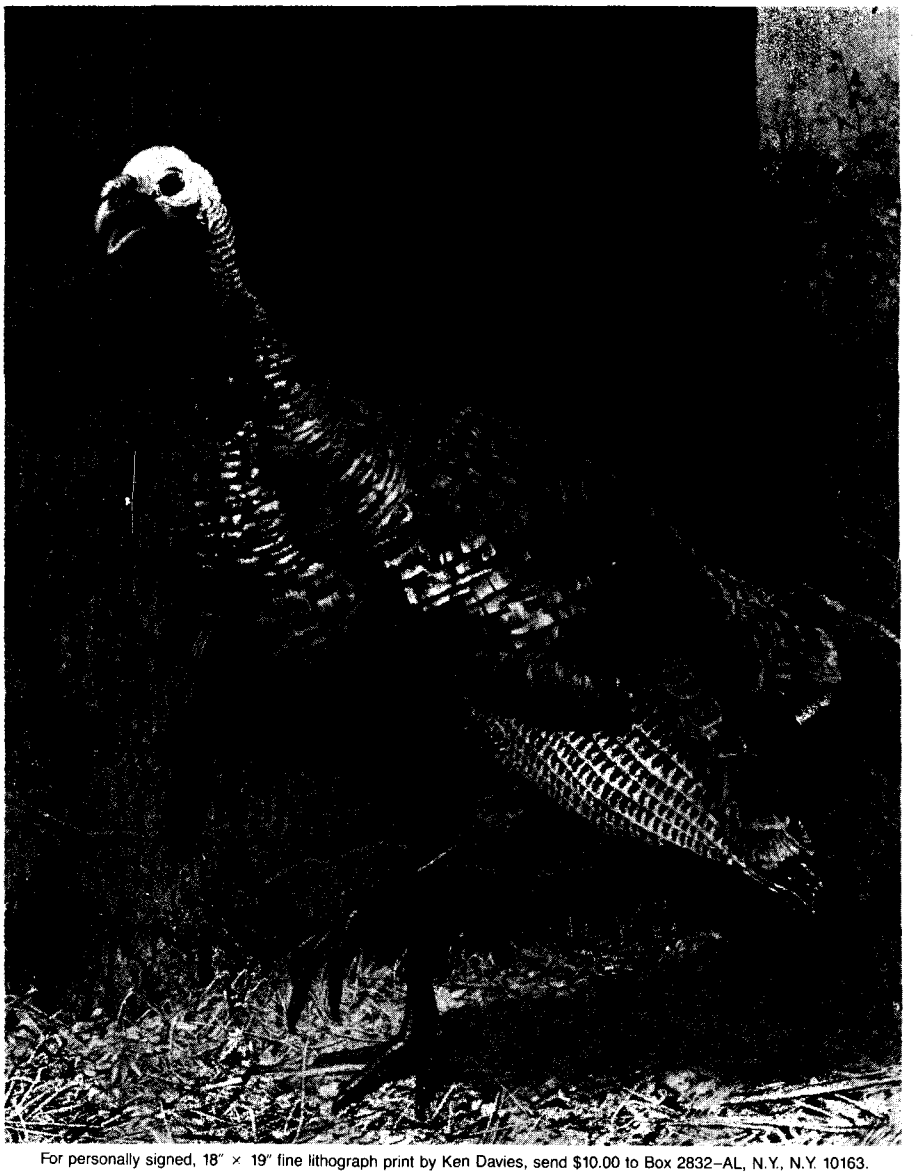
Sassou-Nguesso considers the real enemies of his regime. "Seven hours of work, not seven hours at work," reads one. "Down with the one who thinks he has a right to his salary without work," reads another. The signs seem to have produced their intended effect. One finds little evidence of the crime, prostitution, and corruption that plague the Congo's giant neighbor, Zaire.

On returning to the Congo after a trip to Kinshasa, the sense of dignity and bonhomie one experiences is impressive. When a robbery is committed in Brazzaville these days, the Congolese automatically say, "It must have been a Zairian." They warn foreigners to watch their wallets if they go to the Zoo, one of several discothèques "frequented by Zairians." Even more striking than the lack of hunger-bloated children, whose faces have, for many Americans, become synonymous with Africa, is the sense that the people here are aware of their personal stake in the Congo's economic recovery: the waiter who beams at the mention of Pointe-Noire ("That is our economic capital, Madame"), the cab driver who proudly shows off the M'Bamou Palace Hotel ("*That's* where our future lies"), the Leningrad-trained forestry engineer who says, "We can do nothing without the help of the West."

ENCOURAGED BY THE current climate of political stability and economic reform, Western investors are responding to Sassou-Nguesso's overtures. The first to take advantage of the new investment opportunities have been the French, the Congo's old colonial masters. The number of French people working in the Congo has doubled in the past two years—at present, the total is about 8,000—and France now holds a controlling interest in about 30 percent of the economy and provides 65 percent of the imports. Starting at Ouesso, a bush town nine days upriver from Brazzaville, where little girls sell peanut butter wrapped in banana leaves, the French firm Ducler is putting one of the world's most expensive roads through the dense equatorial forest. The 600-kilometer road, which is expected to cost $1 million per kilometer and which will take six years to complete, will allow tropical hardwoods to be transported to the coast in twenty-four hours—rather than the months required to float logs down the river. In Pointe-Noire, where the yellow postboxes are identical to



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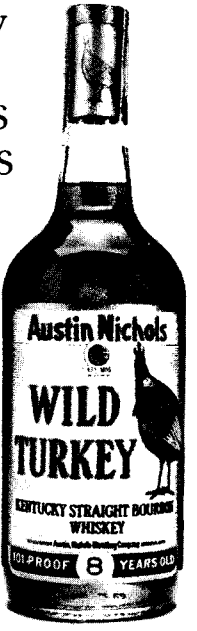

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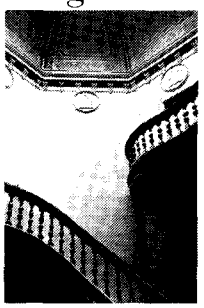
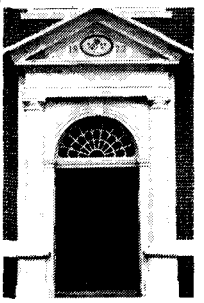

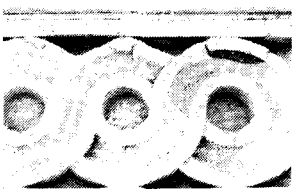

Guarding America's Heritage

those in Paris and the train station is a replica of Deauville's, the blue-and-red flag of Elf Congo—a state oil company that is 80 percent French-owned, is French-operated, and produces two thirds of the Congo's oil—now flies alongside the crimson flag of the Congo.

The current improvement in relations with France is largely the result of the election of François Mitterrand, that country's first Socialist president since 1938. Quick to side with Free France in the Second World War, the Congo was for years devoted to De Gaulle, so much so that tribal priests once erected a giant totem on which they mounted a replica of the general's nose. But with the radicalization of the regime under Ngouabi, the Congo fell out of favor with its former colonial ruler. In 1981, the Congo was welcomed back into the francophone fold by Mitterrand, who was mobbed by appreciative Congolese during his visit (the first by a French president) in 1982.

Relations between the two countries are good, generally, and the Congo has little of the colonial "complex" that plagues the relations of many African states with their former rulers. The capital is still named after its French founder, Savorgnan de Brazza; French is still the official language; and little effort has been made to Africanize official dress. The Congolese, however, are anxious to diversify contacts, especially in offshore oil exploration. "The number of contacts we have with France is not a question of preference but of volume based on history," Emmanuel Yoka explains. "I speak French, I wear suits, I eat cheese. All that will remain. It's our minds we must keep free."

The diversification seems to be under way. Italy controls AGIP, the Congo's other foreign-operated oil company, and two American oil companies, Cities Service and Coastal, are currently involved in further oil exploration. U.S. imports from the Congo have more than doubled in the past two years and now are valued at some $600 million; the United States is the largest buyer of Congolese oil, taking 80 percent of what is produced. In turn, the Congo has "significantly increased its American imports," according to a U.S. Embassy official. It recently expanded its domestic airline, Lina-Congo, with the purchase of a Boeing 737, and it has bought $17 million worth of sugar-refining equipment. But the main import from the United States

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these days seems to be *le management*. The current demand for Western business know-how is so great that the American Embassy arranges management seminars by Fulbright professors of marketing at the request of the Congo government. Great Britain reopened its embassy in 1968, and in the following years so many British companies have sent representatives on exploratory missions that a Frenchman has set up shop as a go-between. Last spring, Lloyd's of London lent the Congo £15 million for the purchase of several dozen British railway cars, and West German firms are known to be interested in expanding their cooperation beyond the logging companies they run in partnership with the Congolese. In 1981, Japan gave the Congo 200 million yen worth of civil-engineering equipment, and it sells its cars and trucks to the Congo for 40 percent below the market price.

THIS CORDIALITY TOWARD the West is largely the result of Sassou-Nguesso's disgruntlement about the lack of Soviet aid. The Comecon countries buy less than 6 percent of the Congo's exports and provide a mere 3.5 percent of their imports. ("We'd *like* to buy Russian tape recorders," the manager of the central bank says with a grin. "But there just don't seem to be any.") Though the Soviet Union is the Congo's main military supplier—twelve Soviet MIG 21s are visible as you fly over Pointe-Noire—its aid has consisted mostly of selling at inflated prices outdated military equipment and machinery for which the Congolese can get no spare parts. The Soviets built a 100-bed maternity hospital in 1966, and completed the 120-bed Cosmos Hotel in 1969. The latter was so poorly run that it closed in January of 1983, for lack of business. Its management is being taken over by Frantel, the French hotel chain. "For twenty years, the Congo has been ideologically committed to the Soviet Union and has gotten nothing in return," says a French diplomat. Despite the various cooperation treaties, relations between the Russians and the Congolese have never been chummy. The Soviets are regarded as racists who stick to themselves and never have any money. ("Don't ride a bicycle," I was advised during a recent visit, "or people will think you are Russian and no one will talk to you.") This coolness has intensified since Sassou-Nguesso's trip to the Soviet Union in 1981, during

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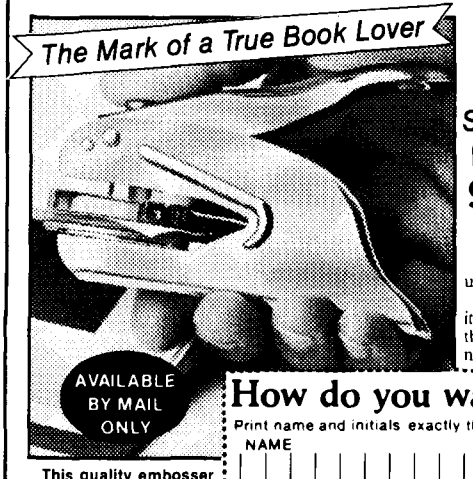

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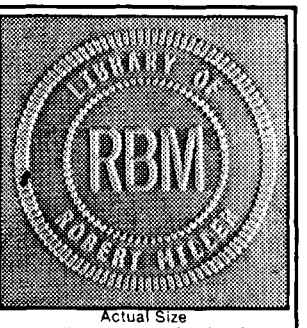

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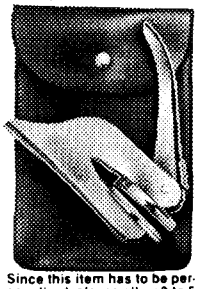

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which the Russians made it clear that they had no intention of participating in his development plans. ("The Soviet Union's African policy is not hard to figure out," says a French official. "They take care of the ideology and leave the economy up to the West.") The Soviets have also angered the Congolese recently by poaching on fishing beds off Pointe-Noire and by shipping minerals to the USSR for "evaluation" and then offering a "take-it-or-leave-it" price. Samples from a gold mine sent to the Soviet Union for analysis have never been returned, and some Congolese accuse the Russians of having stolen them.

Though 400 Soviet teachers and advisers are still in the Congo, and large delegations from the Soviet Union, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia that arrive every other week at Brazzaville's Maya Maya airport are wined and dined in style, the atmosphere is far different from what it was in the days when the Soviets blithely used the Congo to infiltrate Angola. The Congo recently refused a Russian request for permission to build a deepwater port off Pointe-Noire, and the Cubans who used to train the President's bodyguards have been replaced by French instructors.

Some observers feel that the Congolese are in the process of "marginalizing the Russians," now that Mitterrand's election has assured them of French protection. Christian Magrelis, a Frenchman who is helping the Congolese to overhaul their state companies, adds, "They don't have to marginalize the Russians. The Russians are doing it themselves, by refusing to participate in the Congo's economic expansion." There is one point in the Soviets' favor: "Brezhnev always used to meet the President at the Moscow airport," says Christian Bembet, Sassou-Nguesso's press spokesman. "You don't see Mitterrand at the airport to meet African heads of state."

By comparison with the Soviets, the Chinese are well liked, perhaps because, unlike the Russians, they give the Congo aid with no strings attached. They have built a textile factory, a radio transmitter, a 400-bed hospital, shipyards, a state farm, several hydroelectric dams, and an agricultural school. But they are popular for another reason as well. "They bring their own construction workers with them, and Africans love to see someone besides blacks doing hard manual labor," a resident Frenchman explains.

Yet Sassou-Nguesso goes out of his way not to antagonize the Soviet Union and its allies. He has been officially mute on the clampdown in Poland and on the invasion of Afghanistan. He attended Brezhnev's funeral and was one of the first to send telegrams congratulating Andropov. However, he is just as careful not to alienate any of his Western partners. He did not condemn the presence of French troops in Chad, though he sides with the Libyan-backed forces of Chad's former president Oueddei, and, after talks with Mitterrand prior to the Franco-African summit in Paris last October, he flew to Tripoli to encourage Qaddafi to seek a political settlement. Although the Congo instinctively sides with "progressive" African countries like Madagascar, Mozambique, and Angola, and though it has recognized the Polisario independence movement in the Western Sahara, it also has excellent relations with Gabon, its oil-rich, right-wing neighbor, because of a common tribal heritage.

Though he is known to be concerned about an American "big-stick approach" and to disagree with several of President Reagan's policies, Sassou-Nguesso refrains from criticizing the United States by name and is thought to want to visit Washington. Relations are "good," according to Ambassador Kenneth L. Brown. In contrast to the jeering that used to accompany U.S. diplomats riding through Brazzaville streets, Ambassador Brown receives thumbs-up signs as he drives around town in the embassy's black Chevrolet Caprice. A career officer who joined the Foreign Service in 1961, and who has served as the director of Central African affairs, Brown was named ambassador to the Congo, his first ambassadorship, in 1981. He says he has been "extremely well received" by Congolese "eager for American technology, credits, and investment." An amazed embassy employee says, "The mayor of Brazzaville even wants us to open a space exhibition hall right in the middle of town!" The United States is interested in "encouraging the Congo's policy of moderation and openness," according to Ambassador Brown. "At the same time," he adds, "we are not expecting them to compromise their political and economic philosophy."

However, the United States has done little better than the Soviet Union in providing aid to the Congo. In 1982, U.S. aid came to $2 million, much less than the $26 million the Congo received from the EEC and the $17 million worth of projects funded by the World Bank (the World Bank increased its assistance to $35.7 million in 1983). In recent years, U.S. aid has been limited to a project to help small farmers in Mossendjo grow and market their produce, and two health-related programs.

One feature of socialist economic theory that the Congo has not abandoned is belief in a planned economy. "The Plan is the affair of all the people," reads one of the red billboards near the airport. Under the current $2.5 billion 1982–1986 Plan, oil money is being used to develop other sectors of the economy, such as

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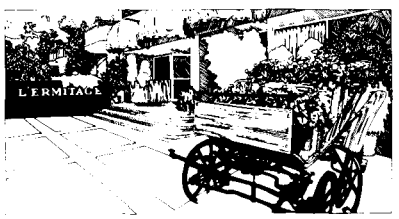

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fishing and forestry, in preparation for the day when the oil runs out. One third of the current investment credits are going to the construction of roads, jetties, and bridges on the Congo's many rivers, in an effort to open the way to the underdeveloped north (the *"désenclavement"* one hears about so much in the Congo these days) and thereby link the economy to the Congo's nearly inexhaustible wood supply. Up to the present time, timber has accounted for only 5 percent of the earnings from exports, because the largest forests have been inaccessible.

The new roads will also provide a way for peasants to get their goods to market. Until the Ouesso road is completed, the only way to get goods out is by barge (and that route is closed when the Sangha River is dry, which normally means during five months of the year) or by plane (and airplanes cannot land on the red-clay airstrip when it rains). By boosting rural incomes in the expectation that they will eventually match urban incomes, the government is hoping to stop the flow of people to the cities and encourage farming. Many of the country's other plans for the future depend on the success of this policy, since the Congo already has one of Africa's most highly urbanized populations. Two thirds of the population live on 7 percent of the land, and only .6 percent of the territory is under cultivation. The Congo also has one of Africa's best-educated populations: 89 percent of all children attend school until the age of fourteen. While the Congolese are proud of this record, Marius Mouambenga, the minister of agriculture, points out that the more educated people are, the less they want to stay on the land and farm. To offset the effects of the French educational system, which stresses traditional scholarship, the Congo is setting up a system of technical schools. "Right now we need farmers, not philosophers," Mouambenga adds.

The Plan's emphasis on roads and infrastructure at the expense of agriculture has been criticized by some of the Congo's Western partners. "They build a road to nowhere and you ask what's there and they say 'potential,' " says a Common Market official, who notes that the Congo still imports nearly half of its food. (One of the biggest imports is wheat, used to make the skinny baguettes of French bread one sees everywhere. Though the 50,000 tons of wheat the Congo imports annually are using up a sizable chunk of its foreign reserves, the government fears that the Congolese would riot if they couldn't get white bread, which is gradually supplanting cassava as the main starch food. They have also acquired from the French a taste for refined sugar. Huge sacks of brown sugar sit at the Suco plant, unexportable because of a world sugar glut and unsalable at home because the Congolese prefer white sugar, imported from France.)

Sixty-five percent of the Plan is financed by oil revenues, with the rest coming from foreign investment and aid. Since 1982, when oil prices began to fall (from $34 a barrel to the current price of $28.75), catching small Third World producers like the Congo off guard, the dangers of having an economy based on a natural resource whose world price fluctuates have become evident. Oil revenues are down 40 percent, and in November, Sassou-Nguesso appeared on television to announce cutbacks in the Plan beyond those announced earlier in the year.

Widespread ill health, due to poor nutrition, and a high infant-mortality rate prevail, and one frequently sees families chanting mourning rites on their way home from the "Clinic of Death," as the Brazzaville hospital is known. Yet health care has received only $64.5 million under the current Plan (about 3 percent of all the projected Plan expenditures).

Some observers fear that the political stability that has accompanied the Congo's oil-based prosperity of the past four years will be disrupted if oil prices fall again. "If they find themselves unable to pay the army or the civil servants, they're in trouble," says a British chargé d'affaires. More than half the Congo's population today is under twenty, and in the year 2000, some 300,000 young people will need jobs.

But, for now, the Congo has a breathing space and the mood is optimistic. Officials point to an 11 percent annual growth rate for the past three years and a currency that is one of Africa's most stable. The Congolese are proud that they are considered a good credit risk internationally. "They want very much to be considered reliable businessmen," says an American diplomat.

Nonetheless, the extent of economic cooperation with the West has sparked talk of neocolonialism. Is the Congo edg-

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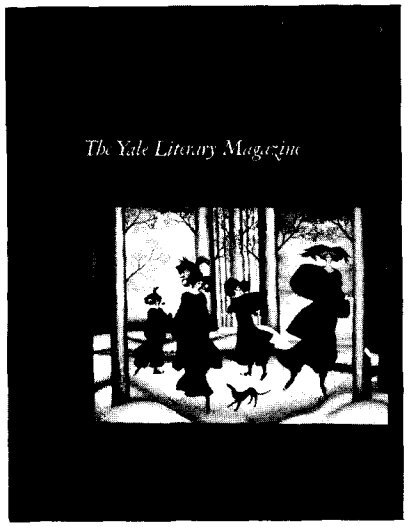

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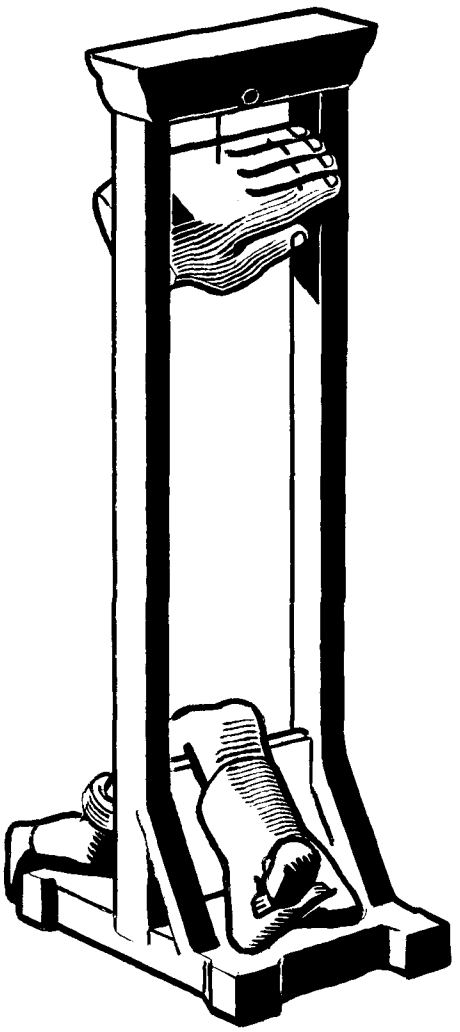
ing away from the Eastern bloc only to ally itself with the former colonial powers on which many African nations have been blaming their troubles for years? And how can its Marxist ideology be reconciled with the current enthusiasm for marketing and profits? The answer to both questions boils down to pragmatism, by which the Congolese mean putting economics ahead of politics. While they are ideologically committed to socialism—"a society where man is not exploited by man" is the way they usually explain it—they increasingly recognize that a period of lucrative capitalism will be necessary to fund their egalitarianism. To put the matter more simply, they've got to make money before they can begin redistributing it. The resulting hybrid economy more closely resembles that of a European socialist welfare state than it does the totalitarian model. "We are socialist," Sassou-Nguesso recently remarked to a group of Western journalists. "And you are too—France, England, West Germany. What's the difference?"

Yet the Marxist rhetoric remains, and many observers feel that it is there to stay, not because it reflects current political thinking but because it provides a convenient rallying point, a banner under which Sassou-Nguesso can consolidate the Congo's diverse ethnic groups. Marxism provides language and rituals capable of uniting a country that might otherwise dissolve into self-destructive factions. "It gives the Congolese a sense of belonging to something bigger than their region or their tribe, a sense they could not get from a more pluralistic society," explains a French diplomat. "Its strength is the one-party system. With more democracy, every tribe would demand its own party."

But others feel that the veneer of Marxism will eventually disappear. "It must, because they are setting up a system to feed people and they know now that Marxism cannot do that," says another French diplomat, expressing a sentiment recently echoed by the minister of agriculture. "We must go with what works," says Marius Mouambenga. "If Marxism feeds the people, fine. But Marxism without revenue is Marxism without a future."

—Justine De Lacy

Justine De Lacy is a free-lance writer based in Paris. She is at work on a book about recent changes there.



PARIS

PROBLEMS OF PUNISHMENT

A sharp increase in crime and resistance from the right have the government divided over whether to continue its program of prison reform

IN PARIS MÉTRO stations, few travelers stand at the platform's edge to spot the approach of a train. One weekend last winter, two passengers were pushed onto the tracks and killed. Such senseless murders might in the past have been treated as *faits divers*, grim stories that the French like to sensationalize, denounce, and then forget. But, reinforced by a report that 1,500 assaults were made on Métro passengers during 1982—75 percent more than in 1980—the public's awareness of the murders has lingered. Métro riders (who take more than one billion rides a year) declared themselves in a recent survey to have been victimized ten times more often than the official rate suggested. Some observers of Paris see the survey results as a reflection less of unreported crime than of widespread anxiety.

A steady increase in street crime since the late 1970s has made fear of lawlessness a fixture of daily life for Parisians. The number of violent thefts in public places in all of France climbed an average of 13 percent a year from 1977 to 1981. By 1982, a Parisian was about as likely as a resident of New York or Los Angeles to suffer a break-in, according to figures from the French police and the Ministry of Justice. Although the incidence of personal violence, such as rape and murder, increased much more slowly than that of theft, the rate of armed robbery nationwide rose nearly 200 percent from 1972 to 1981, to a total of 5,400 incidents; and motor-vehicle theft has quadrupled since 1963, along with the number of cars on the road. Public indignation about *l'insécurité* became a potent political tool by the late 1970s, one that conservatives learned to use skillfully.

Blaming indulgent judges and elements of the immigrant population, the rightist government of president Valéry Giscard D'Estaing heightened the impression of criminality out of control. Giscard geared up his 1981 re-election effort by introducing in 1980 a controversial "Security and Liberty" law. Written by Alain Peyrefitte, then the minister of justice, the law demanded harsher penalties for many crimes, especially thefts; all but eliminated the judges' traditional right to modify sentences according to circumstances; and permitted unlimited identity checks by the police for the first time since the Vichy regime of the Second World War.

A majority of the country's magistrates opposed the law, as well as Peyrefitte's interference in judicial affairs. Some of his law-and-order moves looked to them like unvarnished self-protection—prosecution of *Le Monde*, the country's most influential newspaper, on charges of disrespect toward the courts, for example, or the use of a special Court of State Security to arrest as a foreign agent a man who threatened to publish details of Giscard's allegedly suspect dealings in diamonds with a deposed African dictator. But despite opposition,

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including street demonstrations by judges, the judicial system on the whole yielded to Peyrefitte. "Security and Liberty" was accepted by Parliament in the winter of 1980, and the prison population (including pretrial detainees), which had averaged 31,000 from 1970 through 1977, increased to more than 40,000 by early 1981.

Unfortunately, the crime rate continued to rise at the same time. Giscard's politics of alarmism prevented him from pointing out facts that might have dispelled the aura of menace—for example, that France's rates of murder and armed robbery were at their worst just one-tenth those of the United States, and were below those of West Germany and Britain. Voters seemed disenchanted with the Giscard regime in general, and in May of 1981 Giscard and Peyrefitte lost office to the Socialists.

The left had criticized Giscard's law-enforcement policy as threatening civil liberties and promoting fear but doing little to reduce crime. Some professionals, such as judges in the left-liberal union (there are two main unions for judges; the other, to which two thirds of the judges belong, is conservative), argued that Peyrefitte's program to incarcerate young first offenders in prisons where 60 percent of the inmates were repeat offenders seemed unlikely to improve crime rates.

Complaints that French administrations manipulate the courts are really complaints about the structure of the French legal system, with which Louis XIV replaced local and church laws in the seventeenth century; the existing penal code was instituted by Napoleon in 1810. All of France's 5,476 *magistrats*, who include trial judges, prosecutors, and legal administrators, are lifetime civil servants trained at the same national academy, in Bordeaux, and they may serve in any or all of the three categories during their careers. Only defendants in the most serious felony cases, called *crimes*—which account for fewer than one percent of convictions—have the right to jury trials. The *magistrats* mostly prosecute, judge, and sentence defendants who are accused of less grave offenses, called *délits*, which make up an overwhelming majority of French crimes (not counting traffic offenses and the like) and include everything from writing bad checks to rape and most of the street crimes that have aroused the public's anxiety.

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In *délit* trials, defendants have surprisingly circumscribed rights. A defense lawyer, or *avocat*, has no access to his client for a period of between twenty-four and forty-eight hours after the arrest—the notorious *garde à vue*, during which, it is commonly assumed, the police extract confessions by coercion. A suspect caught red-handed can be tried and sentenced within twenty-four hours, in a forum traditionally called the Tribunal des Flagrants Délits. In Paris, 50 percent of *délit* trials are decided in "les Flags," a stifling chamber in the Palais de Justice. Jail sentences are imposed in the vast majority of cases. Despite Peyrefitte's accusations, the French courts have lacked neither the tools nor the disposition to punish wrongdoers.

ROBERT BADINTER, President François Mitterrand's minister of justice since June of 1981, could scarcely be a more vivid embodiment of the Socialists' change in approach. Formerly a star criminal-defense lawyer and the leader of the movement to end the death penalty in France, Badinter began his tenure with legislation doing away with the guillotine ("a monstrous anachronism") and thus with capital punishment. Vowing to "raze the judicial Bastilles," Badinter abolished a variety of tribunals and laws—such as the Court of State Security and the "anti-smashers" law, which meted out collective sentences to demonstrators—that Charles de Gaulle and his successors had designed to bypass standard legal procedures. He introduced legislation to repeal Peyrefitte's law, which the Parliament finally passed last spring, with certain modifications.

Badinter has encouraged the wider use of alternatives to jail sentences for young offenders, such as the confiscation of their cars or the denial of privileges like check-writing. He has emphasized restitution to victims and work "in the public interest," sentences that seemed effective in limited tryouts around the country. And he has promoted a revision of the 1810 penal code, two of whose goals are to stiffen the punishment for white-collar crime, such as fraud (which has increased 637 percent in ten years), and to assign legal responsibility for occupational hazards, deaths from which are twice as common as voluntary homicide in France (job accidents in the United States, by contrast, kill 60 percent as many people as are murdered).

With a consistent determination unusual in the Mitterrand regime, Badinter liberalized prison life. He abolished solitary confinement for entire sentences; he authorized, for the first time, visiting rooms without glass walls or bars separating the visitors from the prisoners; he granted inmates the right to unlimited correspondence (though prison mail is still scanned by officials); and he instituted a new Sentence Court to rule on conditional releases from prison, curtailing the power of prison administrators to act without judicial oversight.

Many of Badinter's prison reforms may never get a full testing, however, because of resistance from the criminal-justice bureaucracy. "The blockage against Badinter is absolutely enormous," says a prison social worker at Fleury-Mérogis, a huge *maison d'arrêt* just outside Paris, where inmates await trial or serve sentences of less than a year. It holds 10 percent of France's penal population. The "blockage" against reform is formidable: top prison administrators often direct the unions of guards they supervise. This so-called "penitentiary lobby," admittedly linked to right-wing political parties, has at Fleury-Mérogis, for example, kept inmates from using the open visiting room more than once every three months, and has conducted strikes for increased prison staffing, during which inmates' privileges of receiving mail and seeing their lawyers have been curtailed. Some of the prison-guard unions, playing to the suspicion that Socialist policies will free murderers, have helped popularize the slogan "Badinter has emptied the prisons and filled the cemeteries."

Badinter has not found many of the country's *magistrats* enthusiastic about his reforms either. As a former *avocat*, he remains an outsider. "Nothing has changed on the daily level in two years," concedes Simone Gaboriau, president of the left-leaning judges' union. In the past year, judges confined more defendants before trial (there is no provision for bail), passed out longer sentences, and granted fewer early or conditional releases from jail than they did before Badinter took office. As a result, the prison population, which dropped to 30,000 in 1981, after Mitterrand freed more than 6,200 inmates in a traditional Bastille Day amnesty, has since risen to more than 38,000—nearly the level reached during Peyrefitte's heyday. There are places for just 30,000 prison-

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ers in the system; some of the twenty long-term prisons and the 144 short-term *maisons d'arrêt* are at more than 200 percent of their intended capacity.

All the same, the police demonstrated fiercely against the government's "*laxisme*" last June, after the shooting of two Paris policemen. (The 92,000-man police force is distinct from the 75,000-man Gendarmerie, controlled by the defense ministry, which carries out judges' orders, serves as the military police, and patrols national highways.) Led by prominent extreme-rightist politicians, a crowd of several thousand policemen, most of whom belonged to right-wing unions, marched on ministries, calling for Badinter's resignation. Their fellows guarding the nation's top officials welcomed them. "Badinter is deliberately trying to break the justice system," a retired policeman said a few days after the demonstration, a remark typical of the moment. The Socialists denounced the event as a "seditious" challenge and dismissed the policemen who had led the two principal right-wing unions.

Although the police's advocacy of strong security measures and conservative politics is popularly assumed, the standoff between the police and the Mitterrand regime was not inevitable. A majority of the force belongs to a socialist union, and 65 percent of the force voted for the left in 1981, largely in hopes of shedding their reputation as repressive pawns of Giscard. Unfortunately, the image fostered by the Socialists' goals for the force is not much better. Interior Minister Gaston Defferre, who officially directs the police, has favored various factions within the ranks, according to his momentary political needs. Such transparent politicking has revived old feelings of neglect among the police: the starting salary remains just 5,082 francs ($635) a month, less than half that in the United States, and many patrolmen complain of continuing unpopularity with the public.

NOWHERE ARE THE police less welcome than in some of the low-rent, high-rise housing projects that the French call HLMs, situated outside many of the large cities. Poorly built towers rising from desolate streetscapes, the projects, most of which have been built by the government in the past twenty years, have become some of France's toughest neighborhoods. In a complex called Les Minguettes, near

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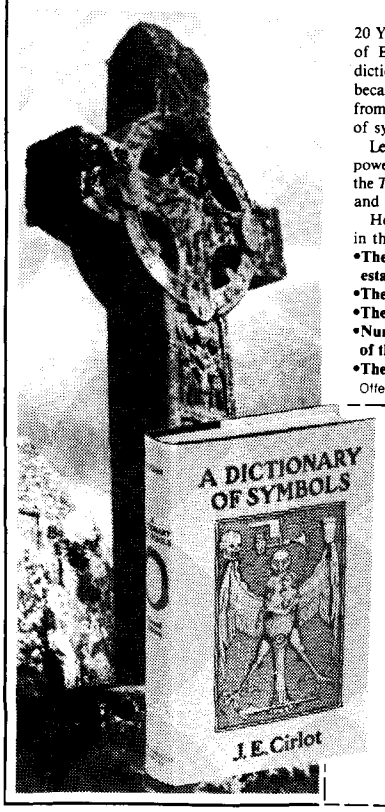

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Lyon, for example, the presence of the police for any reason may provoke rock-throwing. Delinquency has become pervasive in the projects, many of which have become Arab or African ghettos.

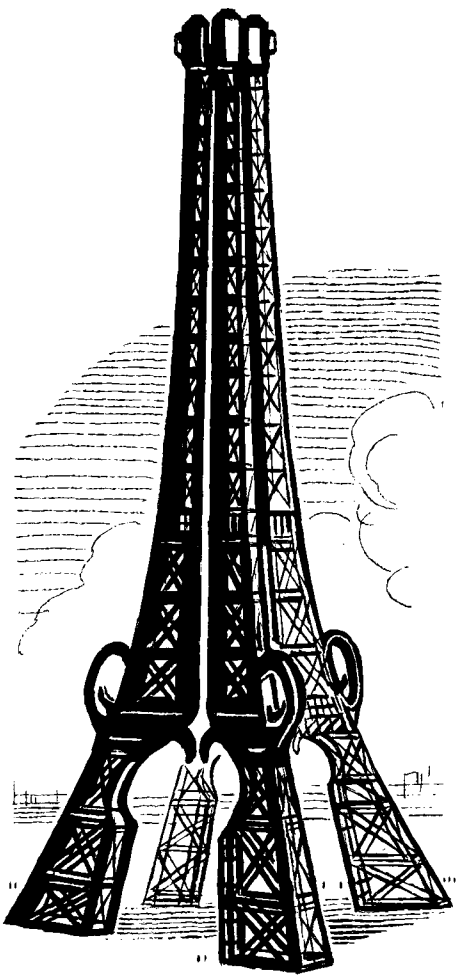
For many people, puzzling out why such environments breed disaffected and violent teenagers takes second place to hostility toward the immigrants who live in them. "The government opened the frontiers. Now we have ever-increasing pickpocketing, chain-snatching, and break-ins," the police commissioner of a heavily immigrant district in Paris observes unblushingly. Extreme right-wing groups like the National Front denounce immigration and laxity as twin evils.

Even France's old resentment of Jews finds its way into anti-crime arguments: Badinter, who is Jewish, has been denounced by a few rightists as "mold" and "foreign," anti-Semitic epithets used by the Vichy regime. That immigrants are popularly blamed for crime (as well as unemployment) has inspired a broad group of public figures, including some leftists, to argue that France has reached its "threshold of tolerance" for foreigners, especially North Africans. The public hostility has been aggravated by the release of police crime figures showing that foreigners are arrested for 17 percent of the country's robberies and 26 percent of its rapes; they account for 15 percent of all arrests, though they make up only 8 percent of the population.

A number of reports and studies, however, including one by the National Center for Scientific Research, have indicated that immigrants, an unusually large proportion of whom are eighteen- to thirty-year-old unattached men with little education and few job skills, commit robbery and violent crimes at a somewhat lower rate than their Gallic peers do. As a writer in *L'Express* magazine said, "We don't forgive them for incidents that, committed by someone French, would be wiped away with a sponge."

Forgiving wrongdoers is last on the agenda of a group called Legitimate Defense, which encourages homeowners to shoot burglars. "If someone really wants to try something rotten, let him enter, and then open fire," says an official of the group, which defends people arrested for maiming or killing thieves. French law limits a self-defender to actions proportionate to the immediate threat; unless an intruder pulls a gun, firing on him is a crime.

Representatives of the group, which is headed by a seventy-five-year-old retired judge, François Romerio, have made appearances at murder trials across France, bringing victims' relatives to court and publicizing instances of lenience toward prisoners. Claiming to have 100,000 supporters, Legitimate Defense has fought for reinstatement of the death penalty, which Romerio admiringly calls "the atomic bomb of penal law," because it is final.



Despite damaging publicity from the mistaken shootings of neighbors and family members along the way, Legitimate Defense has won a considerable following in its campaign for wider permission to attack thieves, especially through its support for Lionel Legras, a car mechanic made famous as "the man with the booby-trapped transistor." Legras fatally wounded a burglar of his summer home in 1976 with a radio that concealed a timed detonator. Having been convicted of manslaughter two years later and given a token sentence, Legras was acquitted by a jury in a second trial last winter.

In a 1982 survey by Louis-Harris-France, nearly two thirds of the respondents expressed sympathy for or approval of setting a trap—a result especially surprising from the French, who have historically relied on the state to take care of their problems. An equally large majority in other polls have wanted to see the guillotine in use again.

Mitterrand has resisted pressure for more repressive justice and has supported Badinter against his shrillest attackers. Other top Socialists, such as Defferre, the minister of the interior, have been conspicuously silent at key moments. The Socialist-dominated Parliament has departed from its traditionally liberal platform on justice, by retaining the Tribunal des Flagrants Délits under a new name and by refusing to repeal the provision of Peyrefitte's law that allows unlimited identity checks. Policemen regularly conduct sweeps of immigrant districts, not only checking the documents of scores of dark-skinned people in cafés and Métro stations but also searching them head to toe. These sweeps are the kind of threat to civil liberties that the left once deemed unacceptable but that are considered by most to be normal practice today.

The compromises have not helped the government either to make its case for justice reform or to combat the exploitation of fear by the opposition. In fact, the right has intensified its attacks on the Socialists for their inability to reduce crime. Badinter has been admired—even by his adversaries, however grudgingly—for putting himself on the line in order to defend his policies. But in his campaign to limit imprisonment for lawbreakers, Badinter is strikingly isolated from other government policy-makers, which has led to speculation that he may decide to give in to pressure and leave office later this year, probably after he finishes his revision of the penal code. If no one tries to make him stay, the left will have signaled its willingness to run with the conservative tide favoring harsher justice.

—Daniel Cohen

Daniel Cohen is a free-lance writer and photographer in New York.

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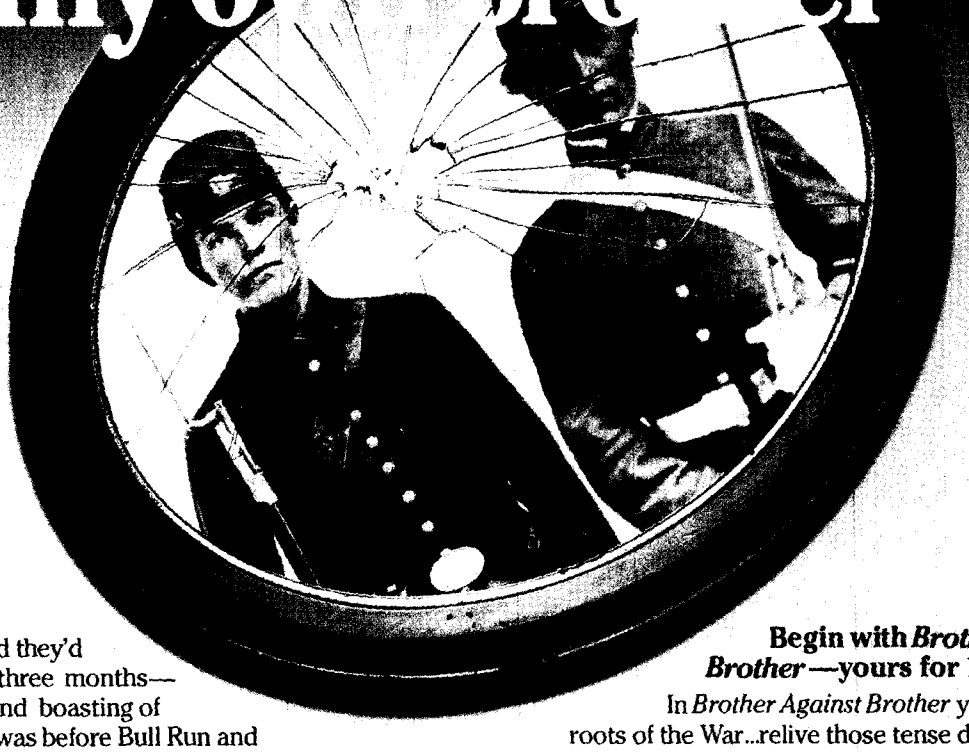

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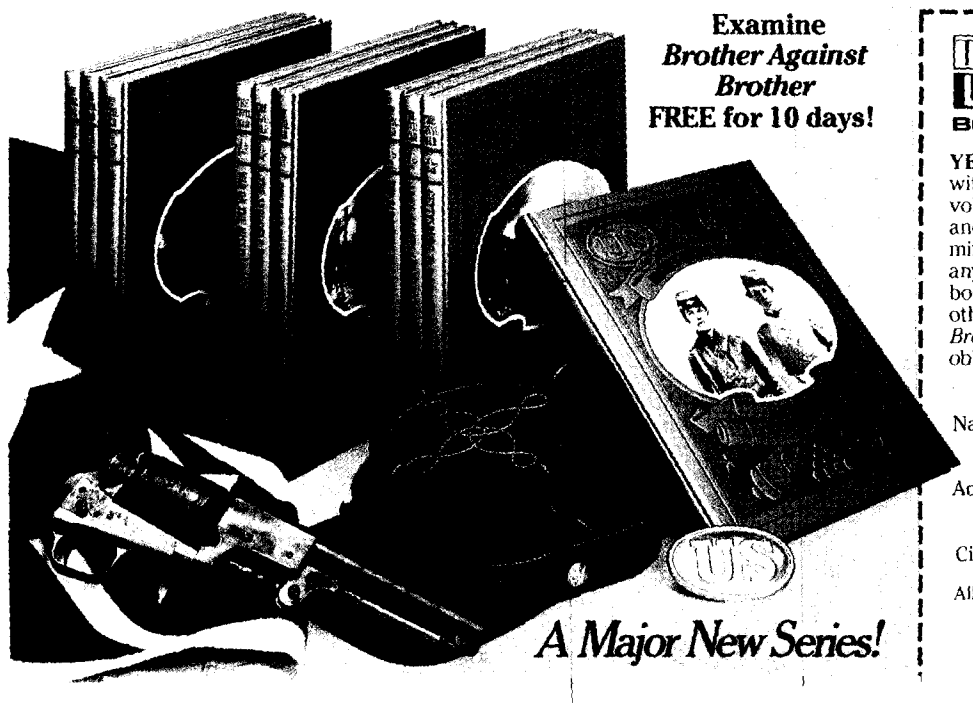

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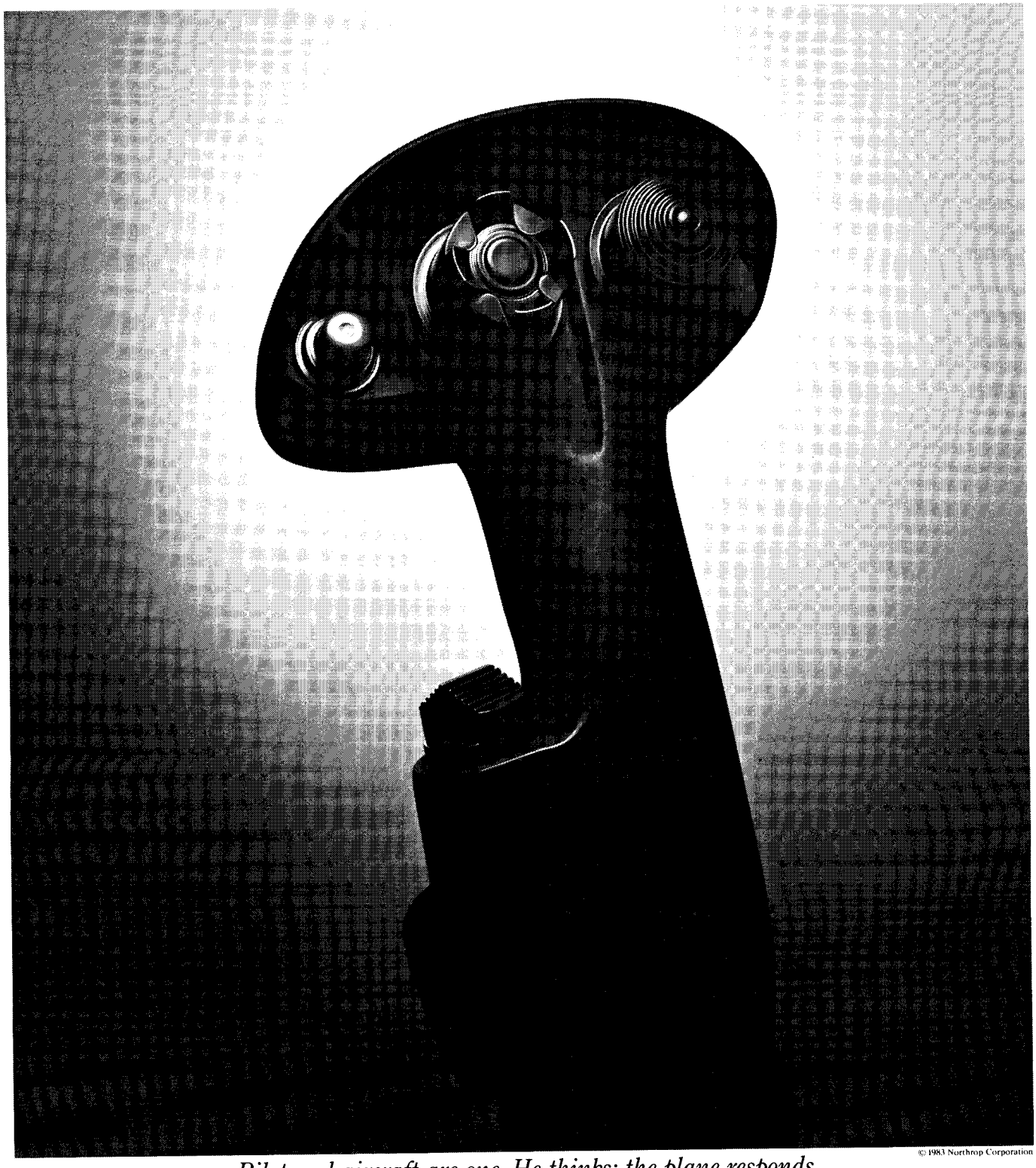

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The United States and the Soviet Union are engaged in a competition that threatens both with nuclear annihilation

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

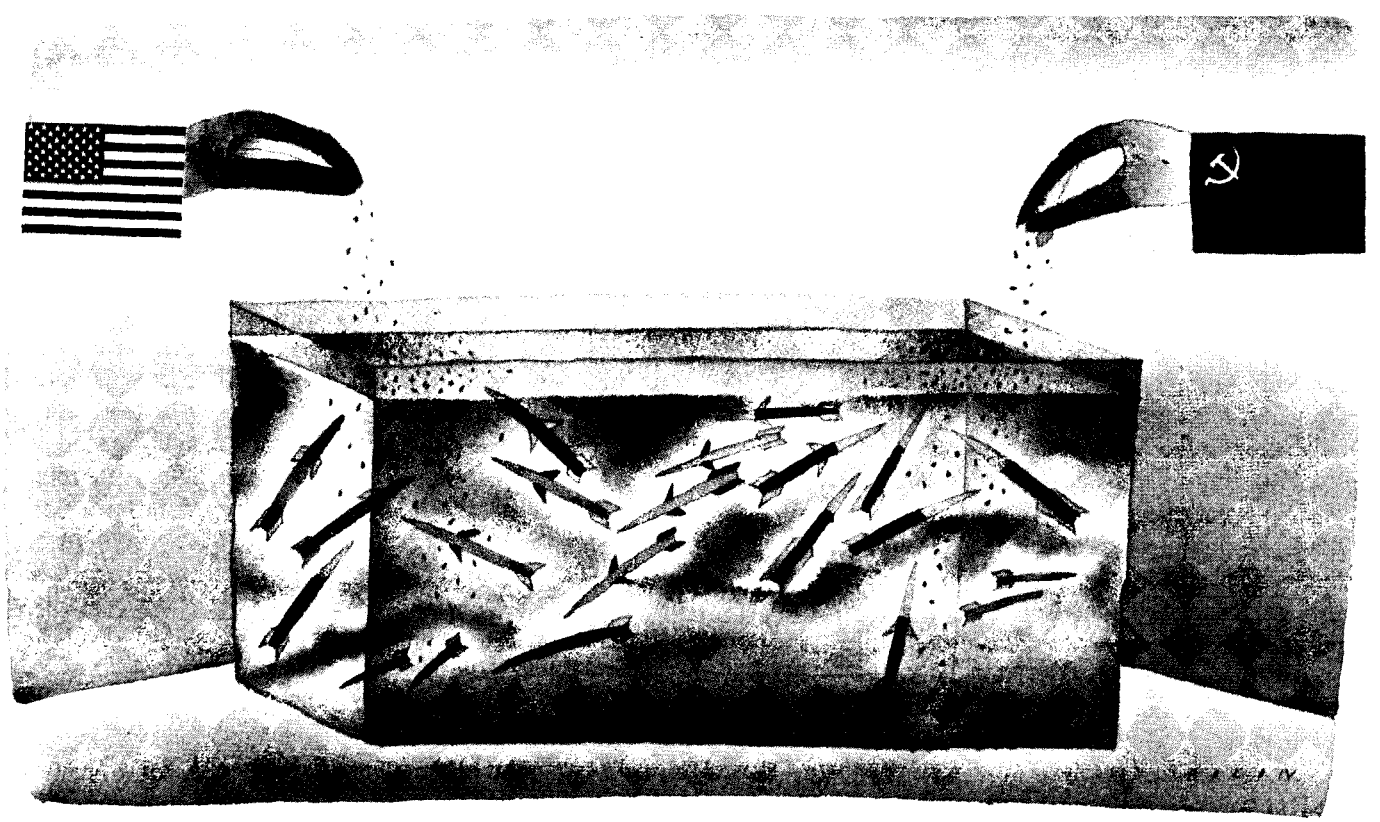
BY THOMAS POWERS

THE BAD NEWS ABOUT THE BOMB CAN ARRIVE IN many different ways. For me, it was an accumulative thing—the result of many encounters with the people who design, build, test, buy, protect, explain, decide where to point, and prepare to deliver nuclear weapons. By "bad news" I don't mean simply the knowledge that these weapons threaten us to an unusual degree. Pretty much everybody has that straight. I mean a belief, an inner conviction, an awareness deep in the primitive center of the brain, that these weapons are really out there, they work, and they will be used if we go on as we are.

It's hard to think of war in peacetime. Americans in particular find the danger difficult to grasp. We live in a heavily militarized country, but we rarely see a military uniform on the street. We missed the worst of the two big wars of the century. We never had to live on turnips, pack our belongings in wheelbarrows and flee an army, huddle in the dark underground while the dust sifted down and the earth shook, be grateful to sisters who earned cigarettes and canned meat from soldiers of an occupying army in the usual way—all routine experiences for Europeans above a certain age. Indeed, some Americans have such difficulty seeing war as anything but a time of excitement that they point to the 20 million deaths suffered by the Soviet Union during the Second World War as evidence that the Russians have been hardened by war, not made cautious by it, and therefore wouldn't shrink from risking another. The Russians I've met (not many—a few dozen) for the most part have been patient, cautious, reasonable, businesslike, and not easily provoked. But the idea that they don't care about all those dead brothers, fathers, and uncles, about the children who starved and froze—that brings color to their faces and passion to their voices. Americans have no such national memory and must depend on what they read—a pallid substitute.

Even defense professionals responsible for the hardware

Thomas Powers is a contributing editor of The Atlantic.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY JEAN-MICHEL FOLON

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of modern war tend to forget what their work is leading up to. A civilian analyst who spent four years on Carter's National Security Council once described to me a study he'd done on the use of tactical nuclear weapons in the opening hours of a big war on the Central Front, in Europe. Lots of such studies had been done in the past, but they all killed too many civilians—millions of them; there was no way to limit the war. But one day—it happened to be his daughter's fourth birthday—the analyst got to thinking about Soviet rail lines to the West. How many nukes, he wondered, would it take to isolate Soviet forces at the front? So he got out a lot of military maps and spread them all over the floor. "Whenever you see someone in the analysis business using maps, you can be sure he's a serious person," the analyst said, implying that the rest was just talk. He got out his bomb-effects computer, which looks like a round slide rule, and started drawing circles around rail junctures. Right away it began to look good. He was excited. He really had something. "It's so cheap," he said to himself. Instead of casualties in the millions there might be "only a hundred thousand dead"—far fewer than it would take, presumably, to touch off an all-out nuclear exchange.

After a couple of hours of preliminary work, he left to take his daughter out for a birthday lunch, and it hit him, as they stood in line at McDonald's, what he'd been thinking about all morning: 100,000 dead, *like that.* Images warred in his mind—himself on his knees with his maps and templates, his daughter dead—and he felt ill with the enormity of what he did for a living. Later, of course, he went back to his maps and his plan and wrote a paper on it.

My own sense of the bad news came in fits and starts—for example, at the National Atomic Museum, at Kirtland Air Force Base, near Albuquerque, New Mexico. There you can see bomb casings and missiles for many of the nuclear warheads developed since 1945. The casing for Fat Man—the type of bomb dropped on Nagasaki—looks like a cartoonist's idea of a bomb. It's a gross, bulbous monster with a ridiculous little tailfin. It looks heavy and lethal, but also has a dated, H. G. Wells air about it, as if it belonged to the era of dirigibles and touring cars. It's not frightening. Down the hall, looming up in the dim light like an olive-green whale, is the casing for a Mark 17—the first American hydrogen, or thermonuclear, bomb that could be dropped by a plane. It's twenty-four feet long and five feet in diameter, and it weighs twenty-one tons, but the numbers don't capture the sense of mass it projects. It truly looks like something that could flatten a whole city.

Later, of course, the warhead designers figured out how to make them smaller. A week after my visit to the National Atomic Museum, I went to Vandenberg Air Force Base, near Santa Barbara, California, where missiles—currently, the MX—are tested, and where a basic course in ballistic missilery is taught to the officers and men who maintain and launch them. There I saw a Mark 12 A re-entry vehicle (RV) of the type that carries a W-78 warhead. The Minuteman III carries three such RVs. The MX will carry ten of a similar type, unless the restraints called for by the unratified SALT II treaty are finally abandoned, in which case it could deliver as many as twelve warheads. And the number of warheads on the Russian SS-18 missile could go from ten to twenty-eight. Some American officials think one Russian response to a failure of the Geneva talks, and to deployment of the first Pershing II and cruise missiles in Europe, will be the testing of an SS-18 with more than ten warheads—a sign that all bets are off. Hard as it might be for most people to realize—we can already blow up the world ten times over, can't we?—such a Russian move would cause panic in Washington. But it's precisely discussion of this sort—abstract and detailed—that makes the danger hard to grasp.

The RV that I saw stands about waist-high. It's a slender cone in shape. Its body has a carbon-carbon skin that looks like tightly woven canvas coated with graphite. The nose is polished, round, and about the size of a softball. I don't know what the RV weighs, but three or four would fit comfortably in the back of a station wagon. The yield of the warheads carried by the RV is about a third of a megaton—about twenty-three times the yield of the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima. The Mark 12 A does not have an antique air; everything about it says state of the art.

On that same trip I paid a visit to the Arnold Engineering and Development Center (AEDC), a vast complex near Tullahoma, Tennessee, where the military tests airframes, rocket engines, nose cones for re-entry vehicles, and other hardware. A businesslike engineer described the MX development program to me, as well as some of the other projects he'd worked on. One was a study of the shelf life of the Minuteman missile, a matter of some concern to the Air Force. A Minuteman is for the most part a simple device, but nothing lasts forever. Year after year, the Minutemen sit in their silos on the Great Plains, the gyroscopes in their guidance systems spinning away at thousands of revolutions per minute, the tritium for boosting the fission triggers decaying, and the explosive aging. From time to time, the Air Force pulls one of the missiles from its silo, trucks it in secrecy to Vandenberg Air Force Base, replaces the warheads with a lot of sophisticated radio equipment (called telemetry) to monitor the missile's flight, and fires it at Kwajalein Lagoon, in the Marshall Islands. Generally it works. But you can't be too careful, and the Air Force asked the AEDC for a shelf-life study to be doubly sure of the Minuteman. The engineer, a young man in double-knits who looked amazingly like Dick Cavett, described all this in detail, but cautiously. He appeared to have a deep suspicion of journalists. He chose his words with care. They were flat and colorless. Only once did he express anything like passion or a personal point of view. I asked how the study turned out. He said it was conclusive: the Minuteman is a durable piece of hardware; even twenty-year-old missiles are just about 100 percent ready to go. And then he added in a voice of startling intensity: *"You can tell that to the Russians!"*

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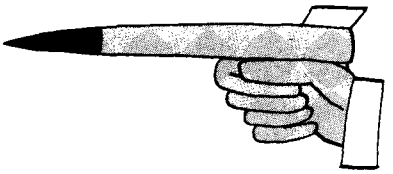

RECENTLY I'VE HAD A GOOD MANY OPPORTUNITIES to pass on the message, but somehow it has never seemed appropriate. Last May, I spent a week with two dozen Russians at a conference in Minneapolis. In July, I talked at length with another fifteen or twenty during a two-week stay in Moscow. They were all, in their different ways, much concerned by the danger of war between the United States and the Soviet Union. Many things worried them—the motives behind the Reagan Administration's program to build new strategic weapons, such as the MX missile (the "Peacekeeper") and the B-1 bomber, the fearful expense of trying to keep up, the failure of SALT, the apparent impasse of the Euromissile talks in Geneva, the prospect of accurate new American Pershing II missiles in Germany, barely six minutes away from the western suburbs of Moscow. But I certainly never heard anything like doubt that the missiles would work if fired. On this point they required no reassurance.

Russians claim America still has a technological edge, but being behind in the arms race is not what frightens the ones I talked to. They have been behind before. It is war that frightens them—not the chance of losing, but war itself. They have absorbed the bad news. I can only suppose this is a result of the Second World War, in which so many Russians died. Twenty million is, of course, a round number. I have been told that its source was Stalin himself, who wanted to emphasize Russian suffering but did not dare reveal the true figure—said to be even higher—lest it reflect on his leadership. If you ask a Russian whether anyone in his own family was killed during the war, you will generally get a list for an answer.

One of the people I met in Moscow was the physicist M. A. Markov, a leader of the Soviet Academy of Sciences and the chairman of the Soviet Pugwash group, which has been meeting with scientists from the United States and other countries since 1957. Markov is seventy-five and in frail health. When he travels, his daughter, a physician, goes with him. His movements are tremulous and uncertain. He speaks in a wavering voice, but with great passion and urgency. In 1955, he showed up in London, quite unexpectedly, for a conference organized by Bertrand Russell on the danger posed by nuclear weapons. Russell and Albert Einstein had issued a declaration, which became the founding document of the Pugwash movement. Markov quoted from the document as if its language were sacred. "It is the most important declaration that exists in the world today," he said. "It was signed by Communists and non-Communists alike. What kind of wisdom signed this declaration? The danger is for *all* people. The declaration said, 'Remember your humanity, and forget all other things.' It contains the widest possible platform—'*Man, whose continued existence is in doubt . . . !*' " It would be impossible to exaggerate the passion with which Markov spoke. He stressed the gravity of each word: " '*Man, whose continued existence is in doubt.*' " How could you say more than that? Who could remain unmoved by such a danger?

Markov does not share with other Russians the anxiety that American technical abilities will allow the United States to race ahead. "The development of the first bomb shows that if something will be done in the U.S.A., very soon it will be done in our country, too," he said. "As a rule, my point of view is that the arms race is like a piece of iron. If you heat one end of it, very soon the other end will be the same temperature. That's a law of thermodynamics. You may be first, but after a while there will be equality again—but at a very high temperature. It is impossible to violate equality."

Markov is haunted by the possibility of a nuclear war. Sometimes he imagines—he knows the idea is scientifically unfounded—that Mars is a dead planet because its atmosphere was destroyed by a nuclear war. "I do not exclude such a possibility on our planet," he said. He makes no effort to spin scenarios of events that might lead to hostilities. The world is too unpredictable for that. "I once had a long discussion about this with Paul Doty [an American biochemist, also active in Pugwash] in a London restaurant," he said. "I told him the most serious historical events were unpredictable. It was very difficult to predict that in Germany—with such strong Socialist and Communist parties—Hitler could arise. It was hard to predict that his first move would be toward the West, instead of the East. It was not easy to predict that Japan's first move would be toward the U.S., not the USSR. It was hard to predict there would be such a dramatic change in relations between Russia and China."

In this world, things happen. "There is a Russian proverb: Even an unloaded gun will fire sooner or later." Markov told a story to illustrate the point. "When I was very young—about fifteen [in 1923]—I spent my vacation in Siberia with my family. I had a gun to shoot ducks, and one morning I had it with me at breakfast. I was sure my gun was unloaded. My sister sat on one side of me, the samovar was on the table here, and across the table was a cossack. My sister said, 'I know that gun is unloaded, but I don't like to see that dark hole pointed at me.' The cossack said, 'I'm a soldier, I don't mind, you can point it at me.' So I pointed it at the cossack. The gun went off. It had been loaded with solid shot, for wolves, and the bullet passed right through that cossack's hair, right down the middle. At the time I was afraid only of what my father would say. But now it's what almost happened that I feel so strongly."

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IN MINNEAPOLIS LAST MAY, THE RUSSIAN DELEGATION to the conference I attended, which was jointly sponsored by the Institute for Policy Studies and two Russian groups, the Soviet–American Friendship Committee and the Institute of the U.S.A. and Canada, had a firm agenda: they wanted to talk about arms control, the Euromissile problem, and how to get détente going again.

This professionalism on the part of the Russians—illusionless and firm without being overbearing—puzzled many of the Americans. "We know who we think they are," said one of the delegates at a closed meeting of the American group near the end of the conference, "but who do they think we are?" And then, as an afterthought, she added: "We know who we are—we're just a bunch of people." The bunch of people had no official standing of any sort, and limited access to people who had. "The fact they're here talking to us," said another American at the same meeting, "is a sign of just how serious the situation is."

"They"—the ten or a dozen Russians who really counted—clearly felt the same way, but were uniformly polite about it. One of them, Vitaly Kobysh, an official on the staff of the Central Committee in Moscow, told me of a visit to the United States during the 1980 presidential campaign. Even after it was clear that Reagan would win, Kobysh tried to look on the bright side. Perhaps Reagan would turn out to be like Nixon—a hard-liner for the folks at home but a realist abroad, someone with whom the Soviets could do business. In Detroit, Kobysh tried to argue this line with Robert Kaiser, a *Washington Post* reporter who speaks Russian, had spent three years as a correspondent in Moscow, and had written one of the standard books about the Soviet Union. "People told me, 'Wait till he [Reagan] is elected; this is just politics,' " Kobysh said. "Kaiser told me no, this is real. And that affected me. When I returned to Moscow and made my report, I had changed my beliefs, and I told them difficult times were coming." Kobysh felt the chill personally. From Minneapolis he had planned to go on to New York, to discuss with the editors of *Time* the possibility of an interview with Yuri Andropov. But the U.S. State Department refused to extend his visa.

If there was a single dominant theme to Russian remarks at the conference, it was Euromissiles—the Pershing II and cruise missiles that NATO planned to deploy in the absence of a Geneva agreement. "Inevitably there would be a heightened tension," said Vikenty Matve'ev, a columnist for *Izvestia*, the official government paper. "Of course, the sky would not fall, but the ground may shake. We might have to break off the Geneva talks, because these talks sometimes give a false illusion." (Earlier, at lunch, Matve'ev told me, "In this world it's not easy to be an optimist. I have lived long enough, I don't care about myself—but my children . . . ") Another journalist, Fyodor Burlatsky, was even more pessimistic. Deployment would bring "a really dramatic situation in Europe," he said. "It seems to me we are underestimating this situation. I don't want to draw a parallel between then [the Cuban missile crisis, in October of 1962] and now, but . . . "

For the Russians the Euromissiles—the merest handful of new warheads (572), compared with the thousands already deployed on both sides—were nevertheless a direct, almost a pugnacious, threat to the Soviet Union: a symbol of the breakdown of arms-control efforts; even an omen of war. Genrikh Trofimenko, an arms-control expert from the Institute of the U.S.A. and Canada, pointed out that negotiating to *limit* strategic arms, instead of to get rid of them altogether, was an American idea. In the 1950s, the Soviets had argued for general and complete disarmament. "Now the situation is reversed," he said. "The ideologues are in the White House and the pragmatists are in Moscow." Mikhail Milshtein, a retired army general who works for the institute, pressed the same point: "It took almost ten years to reach a second [SALT] agreement, and it takes only one election to repudiate everything. Speaking frankly, my personal opinion—the situation is very gloomy. It seems to me we are moving toward an irreversible stage of the arms race."

So it went. The Russians had come to discuss new weapons. The Americans were first with the bomb, first with a workable thermonuclear weapon, first with the long-range bomber, first with an effective intercontinental-missile fleet, first with hardened missile silos, first with missile-firing submarines, first with multiple warheads that could be independently targeted. Every new system increased the danger. The Soviets had always managed to keep up; they would continue to keep up. In their view there was only one sensible alternative—to parse the problem, isolate each dangerous element, and then hedge, limit, and ultimately reduce the weaponry step by step.

In Washington, in certain intelligence circles, there are analysts who keep close track of the Russians who troop about the world to conferences like this. Of course that's the line, these analysts say, but what they're really trying to do is to lock in their current strategic advantages. Georgi Arbatov [the head of the Institute of the U.S.A. and Canada, who did not attend the conference], Trofimenko, Milshtein—these guys are just salesmen.

These analysts have their arguments. They are technical in nature. The Soviets have their counterarguments. The subtleties of parity cannot be settled one, two, three. But in Minneapolis there was no mistaking what was on the Russians' minds. They were plainly worried by and obviously eager to avoid the expensive new round of weaponry symbolized by the Euromissiles.

In the midst of the discussion, one of the American delegates, W. H. Ferry, a consultant to foundations who has been writing about the dangers of the arms race for twenty years, took the floor to make a short statement. I believe I am reporting it whole: "I raise the question here of what this is all about. What issue could possibly warrant the use of nuclear weapons? Are they issues of territory, or human rights? What is it that justifies this confrontation?"

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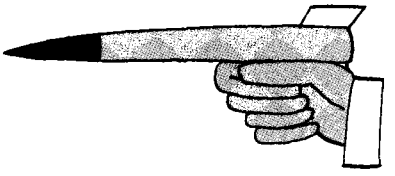
This was followed by a long moment of silence. Perhaps no one could believe Ferry had concluded so soon. No one made any attempt to answer his question. It was never referred to again, by Russians or Americans. It elicited no interest whatsoever.



MICHAEL HOWARD IS A DISTINGUISHED BRITISH military historian and the Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford University. Many of his articles and scholarly papers have discussed war as a thing, a phenomenon, "a continuing activity within human society," something men *do*. This is a neglected subject. The shelves of libraries groan with the histories of particular wars, battles, and even individual military units. When the authors are writing from personal experience, they sometimes pause to reflect on the deeper meaning of war, the awful gap between the reasons and the thing itself. The reasons are often trivial, the thing itself a matter of fear, pain, and death.

The First World War revealed the awful gap to millions of young men in Europe, including many scores of thousands who had been expensively educated at the great universities of Britain, France, and Germany. Before the war, it had been popularly supposed that Europe was too civilized, too closely intertwined economically, and too sensible ever to fight another general war on the Napoleonic scale. A few writers—notably Sir Norman Angell, in Britain, and the Polish banker Ivan Bliokh—even argued that war was impossible. Modern weaponry was simply too destructive for men to endure. In *The Future of War*, a mammoth six-volume work published in Russian in the 1890s, Bliokh described in detail the terrors of the modern battlefield, swept by machine-gun fire and racked by high-explosive artillery shells. A big war would bring millions of men into the field, he predicted. Rates of fire would force them to dig in. It would be a war of trenches. The advantages of the defense would preclude decisive attacks. A war of attrition would follow—in effect, the siege of whole nations. In the end, deaths in the millions, financial ruin, and famine would settle the matter. The defeated would not lose, in the traditional sense, but collapse. Regimes would be swept away in the revolutions that followed. In *The Fate of the Earth*, published two years ago, Jonathan Schell took an approach similar to Bliokh's. Both simply described the horrors we could expect, given the facts. When Bliokh said war was "impossible"—a term he insisted on with journalists—he meant not that it couldn't happen but that the survival of nations would be at risk if it did. Schell, reflecting the strides of science since, goes a step further and says that now civilization, and perhaps even human life itself, is at risk.

Bliokh's vision was unique in its breadth and prophetic accuracy, but a few military men also got an inkling of what was to come from the bloodletting horrors of the American Civil War and the Prussian use of modern breech-loading artillery in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871 (the subject of one of Michael Howard's books). But the Franco-Prussian War ended too quickly for the bad news to sink in. The Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, involving heavy casualties and trench warfare, was too far away. The military observers who saw what happened were mostly of field grade, and the duffers on the general staffs at home did not listen. Thus, only a few prescient military men understood what science, industry, and railroads were doing to the scale of war in the decades before 1914. One of them was Helmuth von Moltke the elder, an architect of the modern German army, who wrote in 1890:

> If the war which has hung over our heads, like the sword of Damocles, for more than ten years past, ever breaks out, its duration and end cannot be foreseen. The greatest powers of Europe, armed as never before, will then stand face to face. No one power can be shattered in one or two campaigns so completely as to confess itself beaten, and conclude peace on hard terms. It may be a Seven Years' war; it may be a Thirty Years' war—woe to him who first sets fire to Europe. . . .

Such premonitions were fully borne out by the horrors of trench warfare on the Western Front between 1914 and 1918. The dead numbered in the millions. Of course men had died in war before, but not like this—blown to bits, buried in collapsing bunkers, drowned in mud, machine-gunned as they tried to make their way through thickets of barbed wire and then left to die of their wounds in no-man's-land. On the first day of the Battle of the Somme, in 1916, the British suffered 60,000 casualties—20,000 of them deaths. The brief official communiqué called the opening of the Somme a success. It was duly printed in British newspapers, followed by page upon page of the names of the killed and the wounded.

The Somme lasted from July into November. Some 1,300,000 soldiers were killed or wounded on both sides. The advance gained seven miles of shattered ground at its deepest point, but left the German front intact. When the British writer Martin Middlebrook, decades later, interviewed survivors for his book *First Day on the Somme* (published in 1972), he found that many of them still dreamed about what they had been through. Another writer, Paul Fussell, argued, in *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), that the First World War permanently darkened the collective mind of Western man, replacing the confidence of the nineteenth century with a foreboding sense of fragility, helplessness, and doom. When enthusiasts of aerial bombing began to write, in the 1920s and

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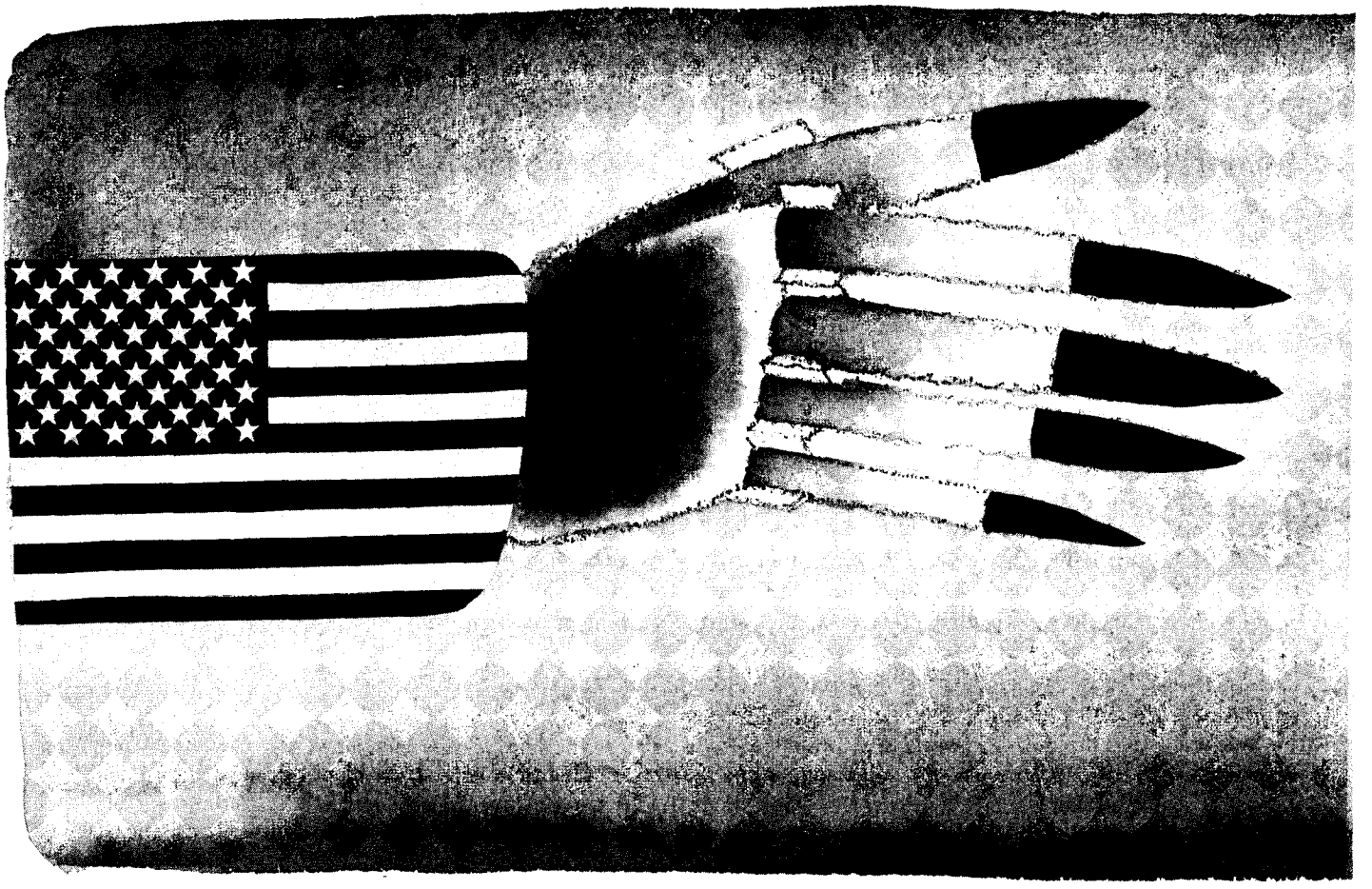

1930s, one of their arguments for strategic attack on cities and factories deep within enemy territory was the chance it offered to avoid another great bloodletting by troops on the ground. The devastation of London, Coventry, Hamburg, Dresden, Berlin, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki duly followed. The significant change at Hiroshima was that one plane, with one bomb, accomplished what it had taken a thousand planes to do before.

The flood of memoirs that followed the First World War broached the awful disparity between the reasons for the war and the war itself. What was it about? How did it start? Why was it allowed to continue? What did it settle? The war bled a generation white, destroyed three of the four dynasties that had ruled in 1914—the Hapsburgs in Austria-Hungary, the Hohenzollerns in Germany, the Romanovs in Russia—and ended in a vindictive peace, which only set the stage for a new war in 1939. The origins of the war have recently been revived as a subject for scholarly study, for a simple and practical reason: the world of 1914 bears a certain disturbing resemblance to our own. Then, as now, the Great Powers were heavily armed. Two alliances confronted each other. An upstart power—Germany—was demanding an equal role on the world stage. Britain was frightened by Germany's construction of big modern battleships. Why did Berlin need this "luxury fleet," if not to challenge British supremacy on the seas? British Conservatives insisted that new dreadnoughts must be built to deter the Germans, and damn the expense. In 1908 they campaigned for the ships on the slogan "We want eight and we won't wait!" Crises were frequent; demands were routinely backed up by military gestures implying a threat of war. The Great Powers confronted each other in peripheral arenas—the Balkans then, the Middle East now. When Bismarck was asked what he thought would set off the next big European war, he said, "Some damned foolishness in the Balkans." But perhaps the most disturbing contemporary parallel is the confidence that all this long preparation for war meant nothing; there would be no war. For twenty or thirty years the optimists were right. Until 1914, the diplomats always managed to settle things before armies were mobilized and shots were fired.

Why did they fail in 1914? In a recent essay, Michael Howard confessed that he has lately begun to rethink the whole subject of the origins of the First World War. He said that he used to assume that an event so large must have had causes to match—deep undercurrents of social change and irreconcilable differences between nations, pushing events into a kind of inevitable, fatal slide that no mere statesman could hope to brake. But now Howard is not so sure. Maybe it was simple, after all—the result of bungling. Maybe Lloyd George, the British prime minister during the last half of the war, was right when he said "We all muddled into war." We might call this the tinderbox the-

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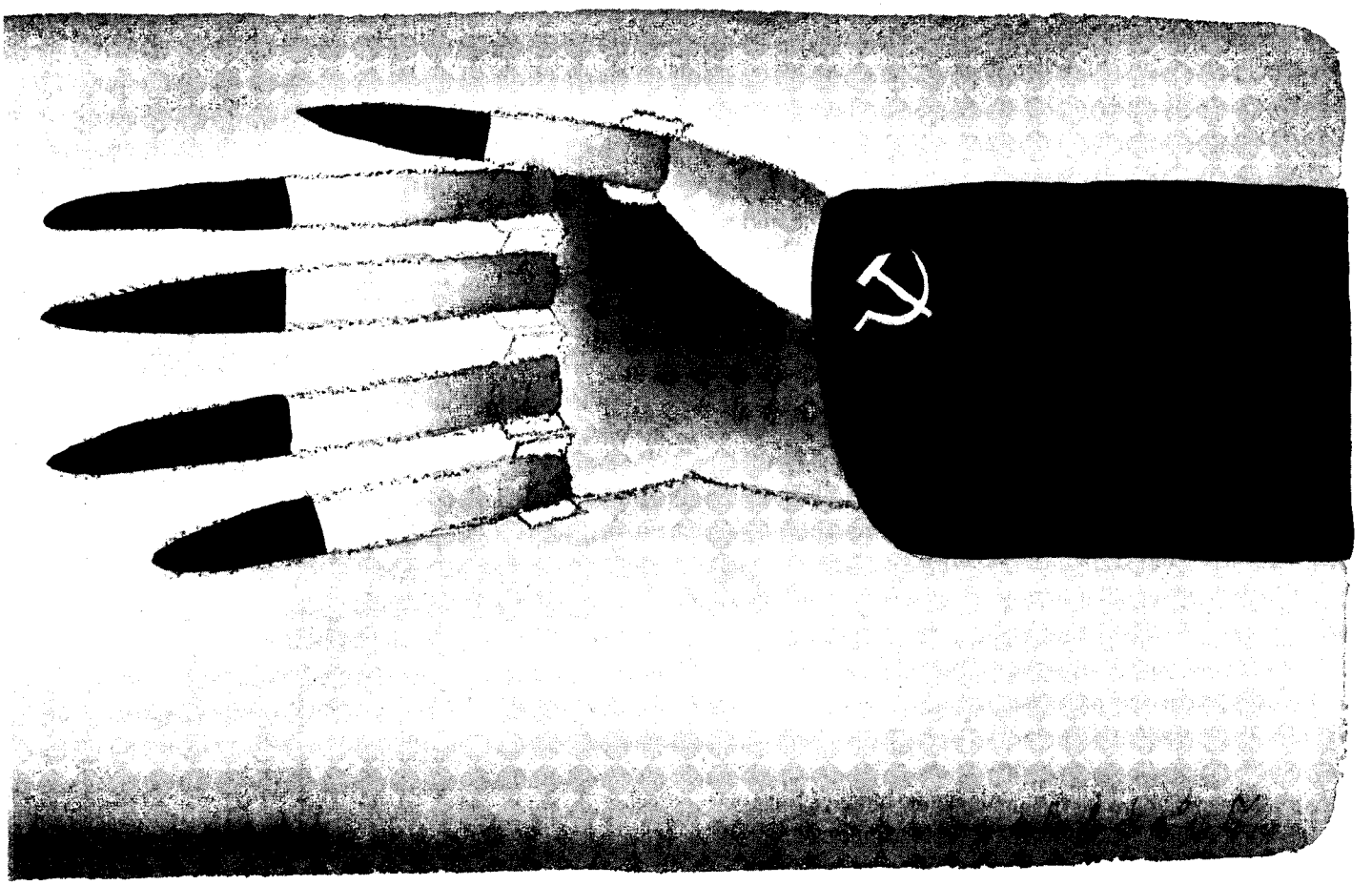

ory of the causes of wars: The problem is not sources of conflict, things nations might be expected to fight *about*, but simply the readiness for war itself. Military strength on one side inevitably arouses fear in the other, which strives to catch up. The first grows alarmed in turn. In such a world it does not take something large to start a war but something small, something unexpected—an assassination in a provincial town like Sarajevo, say—something that might be considered, perhaps for purely tactical reasons, to require a determined response. After that, one thing can lead to another. The armies of Europe did not *have* to mobilize in the summer of 1914. They just did.

You can see the appeal here to a scholar interested in our own day. Clausewitz says that war is the continuation of policy by other means. It is supposed to make sense. But the outbreak of war in 1914 made no sense. Nothing was at stake that could reasonably be said to justify war on a continental scale. Even statesmen at the time admitted as much. But Europe was ready for war. Once the Great Powers began to mobilize, they could not stop. The statesmen of our own day insist that there will be no great war between Russia and the United States so long as war doesn't make sense. Nuclear weapons make it impossible—but impossible, alas, in Bliokh's sense, which is to say, suicidal.

Michael Howard is currently researching a book on attitudes toward war before 1914, but it is slow going. At Oxford, he is beseiged with requests for interviews, television appearances, book reviews, advice on military matters. He writes and speaks about strategic questions with an unusual degree of detachment. As a historian, he is naturally inclined to see modern parallels to things in the past, and as a British subject he has a keen interest, but no direct involvement, in what the planners in Washington are up to. It is Americans and Russians who run the world now.

In January of 1980, the London *Times* published a letter from Howard criticizing, but also explaining, the NATO "double decision" of 1979, to negotiate limits on Euromissiles while preparing to deploy Pershing IIs and cruise missiles if the negotiations failed. The English historian E. P. Thompson, a veteran of the British left, read Howard's letter and flew off the handle. He was horrified by the prospect of a nuclear war in Europe, which he felt the "double decision" promised, and he wrote a long, ferocious essay, "Protest and Survive," which loosed a whirlwind antinuclear movement in Britain. Thompson has since apologized to Howard for his hasty assumption that Howard was somehow *for* a nuclear war in Europe, or at least willing to run the risk of one. At the time, Howard the scholar was aghast, he wrote, at finding himself facing "the polemical equivalent of Björn Borg on the Centre Court," but of course he made a return volley. His response pointed out that the threat of nuclear war does not stem from any

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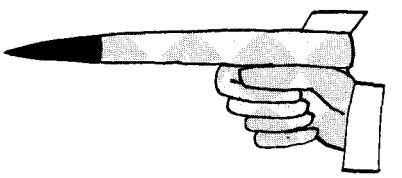
clearly wrong policy that might be reversed in a trice. This exchange led to a kind of appointment by acclamation of Howard as the establishment's sober critic of European nuclear disarmament, a figure who could be counted on in public forums to damn both houses, war-fighters and unilateral disarmers alike. This role is far from being one that Howard chose for himself. He is tired of the hashing and rehashing of the nuclear question. He would like to stick to history.

But of course the nuclear question will not let go. Two aspects of the problem seem to worry Howard. One is a matter of mood. In a recent review he wrote:

> I am an Englishman whose youth was passed in watching the dreadful onset of totalitarianism in Europe, and whose young manhood was passed in fighting it. I am a professional historian who has spent the last thirty years studying the phenomenon of military power. I have noted the appetite of powerful states for more power to protect themselves, and the edge ideology can give to that appetite. I do not think I have any illusions about the Soviet Union. But when I hear some of my American friends speak of that country, when I note how their eyes glaze over, their voices drop an octave, and they grind out the words *the Soviets* in tones of gravelly hatred, I become really frightened. . . .

He is also worried, he said in an interview in London last July, about a kind of over-refinement in the thinking of nuclear-war planners. "They are pushing precision into an area where it cannot survive," he said. He cited a precept of Aristotle's from the *Nichomachean Ethics*: Do not treat any subject with greater precision than is appropriate. Clausewitz's phrase "the fog of war" means that confusion reigns on the battlefield. There, only the simplest of plans may be expected to work. The nuclear-war planners, he feels, have forgotten this elementary point. In 1978, a small group from the Pentagon went to see Howard at Oxford. They were working on a nuclear-targeting study, which led to Presidential Directive 59, a new U.S. war-fighting strategy, two years later. A young analyst in the group had read many of Howard's books and essays and admired his work; he hoped that Howard would come up with some ideas—strategic concepts about what to hit—for beating Russia in a nuclear war. The group explained what it was up to: war might come—then what? How could nuclear weapons be used to weaken and frighten Russia without unleashing the holocaust? Failing that, what could we strike that would bust up the country so thoroughly that the West could recover first? Some time ago the analyst described to me Howard's reaction to these workaday questions. It was one of the reasons I wanted to see Howard last summer. Howard gave them unshirted hell: Didn't they understand what they were talking about? Nuclear weapons can't be used like that! The devastation would inevitably blur the outlines of any plan. The Russians would have no way of knowing what was coming next. The planners in Washington could forget all their subtleties about escalation dominance. What they would get was apocalyptic horror.

When I asked Howard about this in London, he said he'd been appalled by the discussion of "recovery attacks"—the phrase planners use to describe the final stage of a nuclear war, in which the goal is to cripple the Soviet Union so thoroughly that it will collapse economically and break up politically, undoing in a day what it took the czars centuries to put together piecemeal, by war. "It morally shocked me," Howard said. "Their attitude seemed both sick and mistaken." He said he had quit reading the strategic journals. There was no end to the theory-spinning. It was divorced from reality. In a lecture delivered in 1980, Howard said: "When I read the flood of scenarios in strategic journals about first-strike capabilities, counterforce or countervailing strategies, flexible response, escalation dominance, and the rest of the postulates of nuclear theology, I ask myself in bewilderment: this war they are describing, *what is it about*? The defense of Western Europe? Access to the Gulf? The protection of Japan?"



THE STUDY OF WAR IS GENERALLY NEGLECTED FOR the study of military history, which is concerned with how wars are won, not why they take place. Even a long human life holds room for only one or two big wars. The fact that they are hard to stop, once begun, obscures the fact that they are usually a long time in coming. Before the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, in the fifth century B.C., the Athenian leader Pericles warned his fellow citizens that in war chance rules, that no one can predict how things will turn out, that even the rosiest prospects may be dashed by unforeseen events. Statesmen understand this point. They thrive as long as war only threatens, and are cautious about war itself, especially big, decisive wars against strong opponents. These are generally slow to develop and are preceded by such extended episodes of quarreling, alliance-making, and tentative skirmishing—all more or less obscured by secrecy—that just untangling the true sequence of events can absorb a historian's whole career. The consequences of such wars can be so vast—possibly including the disappearance of peoples and the eclipse of empires—that the historian's eye is held fast by the awful spectacle immediately before him. The horrors and the relative infrequency of big wars encourage attention to the particular. Thus historians traditionally have been inclined to ask not why we have wars but why we had this one, and then why we had that one.

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The answers generally stick to the sequence of events, as if there were no such thing as war itself, war as a thing, war as a form of common social behavior, something men in groups habitually and characteristically do.

Perhaps this is inevitable. So much rides on the details. If the First World War had been postponed ten years, a different generation would have died. Rupert Brooke might have spent a long life writing bucolic poetry, and W. H. Auden might have died in his place. The generals of 1914, with their muttonchops and walrus moustaches, would have been mostly in the obscurity of retirement by 1924. The development of aircraft and armored fighting vehicles might have avoided the carnage of static trench warfare. Liberal Western tendencies might have secured a firmer hold in Russia, forestalling the Bolshevik Revolution. Another decade of German submarine-building might have been enough to let Germany starve out Britain when war came. Defeat might have cost the Windsors their throne, and left the Kaiser on his. Who can say? That the potential differences are of such dramatic moment—especially when the war in question is still in the future—tends to narrow the focus of all concerned, leaders and ordinary citizens alike, to the dangers of the day. From the point of view of God it may be immaterial whether war happens now or next year, whether it kills this man or that, whether the side that dictates the peace appears in a gray uniform or a brown. But for men these are the urgent questions, with the result that they study their wars the same way they fight them—one at a time.

This approach begs an important question. Explaining wars by retelling their histories is like trying to explain the phenomenon of divorce by recounting who said what to whom, in every separate instance, through years of quarrelsome marriages. War and the preparation for war are such an integral part of history—the great constant in all times and places—that they may be presumed to constitute one of the great determining characteristics of the human animal. We have a nature; the *tabula* is not quite *rasa*. We live in cities, marry in pairs, and make war against our neighbors. In 1971, J. David Singer, of the University of Michigan, published a study of international wars during the 150 years from 1816 to 1965. He found that there were 6.2 wars in the average decade; that especially intense episodes of violence occurred every twenty years or so; that Europe was the most war-prone part of the world, followed by the Middle East; and that 29 million soldiers had died fighting in the ninety-three wars that took place during the century and a half he studied. Who can mistake a pattern so pronounced? Somewhere in those statistics lurks war as an endemic thing, the sort of war that the British historian Arnold Toynbee once said could be identified as "the proximate cause of the breakdown of every civilization which is known for certain to have broken down."

Toynbee never attempted to say precisely what war is. That would be a tremendous intellectual undertaking, demanding a Darwin, a Marx, or a Freud. But Toynbee's long study of history—he lived to be eighty-six, and wrote till the end—convinced him that the explanation for cataclysmic wars could not be found in the details of who said what to whom and when. He was suffering from chronic dysentery when the First World War began, and so escaped the fate of about half his schoolmates. He was a distinguished sage when Hitler attacked Poland in 1939. He did not watch these wars from lonely academic eminence but was active in establishment circles. He attended the peace conferences in Paris in 1919 and 1946. Twice in his life he was certain there would never again be another big European war—at the beginning of 1914, and at the end of 1918. This confidence could not survive another great war. The onset of the Cold War convinced him that the pattern was still incomplete. In 1950 he wrote:

> . . .the most ominous thing about these wars is that they were not isolated or unprecedented calamities. They were two wars in a series; and, when we envisage the whole series in a synoptic view, we discover that this is not only a series but a progression. In our recent Western history war has been following war in an ascending order of intensity; and to-day it is already apparent that the War of 1939–45 was not the climax of this crescendo movement.

Toynbee's gloom was not unusual in the late 1940s and early 1950s. There was a wide gap between the observers outside of government, horrified by the implications of atomic weapons, and the statesmen inside, who had to reorganize the world. Einstein might have said that atomic weapons "changed everything," but statesmen did not agree. The Allies of 1945 were already deeply suspicious of one another. As early as 1943, an American general in Sicily remarked to the British bombing expert Solly Zuckerman, "Zuck, when we've finished with Germany we'll still want you when we take on the Russians. Don't forget." At war's end, the United States went on producing fissionable material for nuclear weapons, and Britain, France, and Russia all raced to catch up. In 1946, Truman quietly but explicitly threatened to attack Russia with atomic weapons if it did not withdraw its troops from northern Iran, and Stalin complied. By 1948, talk of war was general. The speed with which a war-wracked world chose up sides for a new contest was bewildering. Polemicists on each side leaped forward to explain why the other was to blame, and subsequently historians—in the West, at least—have filled in the details. In my own view, a good case can be made that Stalin's absorption of Eastern Europe, beginning with Poland, virtually guaranteed enmity with the West, but I doubt that scholarly arguments of that kind really explain very much. The history helps, but it is like a medical history that recounts the onset and progress of a disease without explaining what the disease *is*. These events happened too quickly, almost automatically, like the exchange of partners in a dance, as if a Great Power can be

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expected, by its very nature, to cast about restlessly for the next-greatest, and then to direct at it questions of a type certain to promote hostility. Why did the United States go on building nuclear weapons? Why didn't Russia disband its army? Why did the United States cut off lend-lease aid to Russia on a moment's notice, in 1945, turning its ships around in mid-ocean? Why did Russia impose client regimes on Eastern Europe? Both sides' official answers to these questions have been patently disingenuous. Both sides were afraid, not of what the other side *did* but because they could do nothing about it—short of war. The essence of the situation, when all the details have been argued to a fare-thee-well, is an elemental fact: in 1945, the United States and the Soviet Union were big, were autonomous, and had a capacity to injure each other. This confrontation had been waiting to happen. Alexis de Tocqueville had foreseen it 110 years earlier in the concluding passage of the first volume of *Democracy in America*:

> There are at the present time two great nations in the world, which started from different points, but seem to tend toward the same end. I allude to the Russians and the Americans. . . . All other nations seem to have nearly reached their natural limits. . . . these alone are proceeding with ease and celerity along a path to which no limit can be perceived. The American struggles against the obstacles that nature opposes to him; the adversaries of the Russian are men. The former combats the wilderness and savage life; the latter, civilization with all its arms. The conquests of the American are therefore gained by the plowshare; those of the Russian by the sword. The Anglo-American relies upon personal interest to accomplish his ends and gives free scope to the unguided strength and common sense of the people; the Russian centers all the authority of society in a single arm. The principal instrument of the former is freedom; of the latter, servitude. Their starting point is different and their courses are not the same; yet each of them seems marked out by the will of Heaven to sway the destinies of half the globe.

TALKING ABOUT WAR WITH RUSSIANS IN RUSSIA IS A curiously unsettling experience. Russians have had a hard life since the expulsion from Eden; history never lets up on them. The miseries suffered by ordinary people in the nineteenth century are well documented. In the First World War, the slaughter was so immense that the soldiers finally threw down their guns, climbed out of the trenches, and set out to walk home. The revolutions of 1917 were followed by a civil war of unparalleled ferocity, in which prisoners, hostages, and ordinary citizens were routinely shot and whole provinces were devastated. Scarcely had the White generals been defeated when Lenin died, Stalin took over, and the ensuing forced collectivization of peasant landholdings resulted in famines, which killed millions. Stalinist terror killed millions more. Hitler killed further millions. Ordinary Russians know all about this terrible history, but the only episode they can talk about freely is the Second World War. This they do. I know of only one other country where everybody seems to have so many horrors to relate—Israel. Doubting the Russians' sincerity when they talk of the pain of war strikes me as willful and perverse.

Unlike Americans, Russians fear that war is really possible. Ordinary citizens encountered by chance in the street invariably bring up the subject. There must never be another war, they say as one. Why can't we be allies again, the way we were in the war against Hitler? They seem genuinely puzzled.

Russian officials take the same line, and back it up with arguments. They cite the numerous public statements of Brezhnev and Andropov calling for peace and arms control, offering to reduce Soviet missiles targeted on Europe to 162 (the number of French and British missiles), pledging "no first use" of nuclear weapons in the event of war, accepting the principle of a freeze, proposing a general European non-aggression pact leading to outright dissolution of the NATO and Warsaw Pact treaties, suggesting a joint U.S.–Soviet study of space-based defense systems and a ban of same, urging serious talks in Vienna on mutual balanced-force reductions, and in general promising a readiness to negotiate an end to the arms race and the Cold War. They insist that Moscow is ready, that this isn't just talk. It is Washington, not Moscow, that has refused to ratify the second SALT treaty, that suspended the talks on a comprehensive nuclear-test ban, that insists on planning to "prevail" in a nuclear war, and that wants to embark on a whole new round of the arms race in space, they say. Soviet diplomats have got their blue suits packed and their briefcases filled with negotiating instructions. You don't believe us? Russian officials say. *Try us*.

Russians differ in dating the turning point in détente. A few say it all began to go wrong in 1974, when Richard Nixon was forced to resign over Watergate and his policies were rejected too. Others say no, it was Gerald Ford's fault for lacking the political courage to go on using the word *détente*, despite the fact that it continued to be official policy. Some Russians say Jimmy Carter began the process when he adopted a "so-called" human-rights policy intended to humiliate the Soviets. Others place the blame on Paul Nitze and the Committee on the Present Danger, which began to campaign actively against the entire SALT process in the late 1970s. But almost all the Russians I talked to appear to agree that things soured drastically after January 20, 1981, when Ronald Reagan became President. The interpretations have one aspect in common: they fail to take any notice whatever of Soviet strategic-arms programs, or Soviet adventures in Angola, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan.

Georgi Arbatov was confronted with a different explanation for the end of détente at a private meeting in Washington last May. Arbatov is probably better known in the West than any other Russian official outside of the Politbu-

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FOR THE EATING OF SWINE

I have learned sloppiness from an old sow
wallowing her ennui in the stinking lot,
a slow vessel filled with a thousand candles,
her whiskers matted with creek mud,
her body helpless to sweat the dull spirit.
I have wrestled the hindquarters of a young boar
while my father clipped each testicle
with a sharpened Barlow knife, returning him,
good fish, to his watery, changed life.
And I have learned pleasure from a gilt
as she lay on her back, offering her soft belly
like a dog, the loose bowel of her throat
opening to warble the consonants of her joy.
I have learned lassitude, pride, stubbornness,
and greed from my many neighbors, the pigs.
I have gone with low head and slanted blue eyes
through the filthy streets, wary of the blade,
my whole life, a toilet or kitchen,
the rotting rinds, the wreaths of flies.
For the chicken, the cow, forgetfulness. Mindlessness
blesses their meat. Only the pigs are holy,
the rings in their snouts, their fierce, motherly indignation,
and their need always to fill themselves.
I remember a photograph. A sheriff had demolished
a still, spilling a hundred gallons of moonshine.
Nine pigs passed out in the shade of a mulberry tree.
We know pigs will accommodate
demons, run into rivers, drowning of madness.
They will devour drunks who fall in their ways.
Like Christ, they will befriend their destroyers.
In the middle of winter I have cupped my hands
and held the large and pliable brain of a pig.
As the fires were heating the black kettles,
I have scrupulously placed my rifle between pigs' eyes
and with one clean shot, loosened the slabs
of side-meat, the sausages that begin
with the last spasms of the trotters.
O dolphins of the barnyard, frolickers
in the gray and eternal muck, in all your parts
useful, because I have known you, this is the sage,
and salt, the sacrificial markers of pepper.
What pity should I feel, or gratitude, raising you
on my fork as all the dead shall be risen?

—*Rodney Jones*

ro. Since his appointment, in 1968, to head the Institute of the U.S.A. and Canada, he has traveled frequently to the United States and Western Europe, has often appeared on Western television, and has served as an all-purpose spokesman for the Soviet view at conferences and symposia. He speaks fluent idiomatic English, is fully conversant with the nuances of Western opinion, and can hold his own with Western experts on military policy and arms control.

Whether Arbatov counts for anything in Moscow is uncertain, but there is no question that he is taken seriously in Washington. He was granted a visa by the State Department last May on the condition that he not meet openly with the press. At a dinner meeting with a number of journalists, analysts, and government officials, Arbatov presented his view of the recent slide in Soviet–American relations, beginning with the American failure to ratify SALT II after its signing in 1979 by Carter and Brezhnev, and emphasizing the raw hostility in many of Reagan's speeches. He placed the blame for the apparent deadlock at Geneva squarely on the American doorstep.

When Arbatov had concluded, the first question was asked by Edward Luttwak, a well-known author and defense analyst, whose most recent book is *The Grand Strategy of the Soviet Union.* Luttwak's question, after the custom of such meetings, was really a short speech. According to a participant in the meeting, Luttwak's comments went roughly as follows: The Soviet Union often complains that it is ringed with hostile bases. Perhaps the Soviet Union should ask itself why this is so. China has been seeking a working alliance with the West because it is frightened by Soviet military preparations in the Far East. Japan has embarked on a program of re-armament—admittedly, a tentative one so far—for the same reason. Pakistan has been badly frightened by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The rest of the Moslem world is not happy about it either. Both Turkey and Iran have been objects of Soviet ambitions in the past. Why have the Algerians been buying tanks? They have been frightened by Russian arms provided to the Libyans. The nations of Western Europe have no appetite for confrontation, but they reject Soviet claims that the SS-20s represent nothing more than modernization; these missiles are pointed at them, and they don't like it. French and British missiles are pointed at the Soviet Union, just as Moscow claims. But why? Because France and Britain feel threatened. Recent events in Poland were not reassuring to the West. It is not America's doing that Russia is ringed by hostility; the Soviet Union has brought this on itself. Even neutral Sweden, Luttwak said, has been pushed toward hostility. As it happened, a report would be issued the following morning—Luttwak knew this because he had helped to write the report—that would recount in detail the long history of the Soviet Union's deliberate intrusion into Swedish national waters with its submarines. Moscow's bland denials would not stand. Facts were facts. Reagan's hostile remarks could

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not be blamed for the situation in which the Soviet Union found itself. It was what the Soviet Union *did* that explained its predicament. According to my informant, Arbatov denied all. His off-hand dismissal of the incidents in Swedish waters eventually leaked to the Swedish press and caused the Soviets much embarrassment.

These are the routines of the Cold War. From year to year they change only in detail. If you ask either side what it wants, it says peace. If you ask either side why there is a conflict, it blames the other. To the obvious questions you get obvious answers. But even so, things seep through—deeper currents of fear and alarm. For American officials, the Russians' most frightening characteristic is their steadiness. Henry Kissinger mentions this in his memoirs. The Russians may not be subtle in their diplomacy, he says, but once they have adopted a policy they stick to it forever. Americans always want to solve everything before the next election. For Russians, the most frightening thing about Americans is our unpredictability. We're all for peace one year, and are beating the drums the next. I heard this charge often in Moscow last summer. For two weeks, I traveled around the city in the company of a chubby young journalist and translator named Alexei, from the Novosti Press Agency. I talked to Arbatov, to a general from the Ministry of Defense, to the head of the Soviet Peace Committee, to M.A. Markov, of the Soviet Pugwash Committee, to a miscellany of Soviet writers, journalists, sociologists, and arms-control experts, and to the editors of *Novy Mir*, *New Times*, and *Oktyabr*. With the exception of the general, everybody seemed to be operating exclusively on information published in the West. Some of the people I talked to admitted as much. Others, like Arbatov, denied it.

When I asked Arbatov about the submarine incidents in Sweden, he assured me that no such thing had ever happened. The Russian submarine that ran aground in Swedish waters a year ago had merely been lost. The other incidents were all apocryphal. How did he know? He said that he'd had lunch with an official from the Ministry of Defense and had been assured that this was the case. I took that to mean he didn't know but, like everybody else, had merely been given the inevitable line. In Washington, the government officials of one year have returned to teaching, journalism, or think tanks the next year. They

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move about freely and often keep their security clearances. But in Russia people tend to stay put. Civilian analysts in Arbatov's institute usually remain for life. What the military knows it keeps to itself, while everyone else interested in defense issues must master English and steep himself in the Western literature. As a result, discussion of these issues has a curious hermetic quality.

When I began my discussions in Moscow, Alexei had been twenty days without a cigarette; when I finished, he had been thirty-two days without a cigarette, and no longer had difficulty translating "focus of evil" and "forward-based systems." Like the Russians I spoke with in Minneapolis, the group in Moscow represented much of the class of Soviet officials who have been delegated to explain Russia to the West. On certain points they spoke as if they had all read the same books, but as people they had very different temperaments and histories. Some of them were amazingly well informed. One seemed to have read nothing but *Pravda*. Another was a copper-bottomed old Stalinist *apparatchik*. A third reminded me of myself—a journalist and self-appointed worrier about the bomb. Several struck me as being profoundly decent human beings.

Talking with Russians is a delicate business. They are subject to rigid intellectual discipline. The limits of the permissible are exacting. The Soviets have a long history of presuming upon leftist sympathies and sentimental good will in the West. One wants to be forthcoming, but one remembers the awful gaffes of naive Westerners who have been led down the garden path—for example, Henry Wallace, who visited the notorious slave-labor camps of the Kolyma region of Siberia without ever realizing that the "happy workers" he saw there were political prisoners. But if one wants to talk to Russians one has only two choices—émigrés, with ample reason to be bitter, or official Russians, who have been carefully chosen to present a well-crafted line to the West. I spoke to twenty or thirty of the latter, and they all hewed to the line on the points that mattered.

The principal line went roughly as follows: the Soviet Union desires mutual understanding and better Soviet–American relations—peace, if you like—through serious negotiations conducted in a businesslike manner on issues of common interest. It is the United States that is dragging its heels on arms control. Reagan's attack on the Soviet Union as the "focus of evil" in the world is not helpful. The Soviet Union has many domestic problems, and no desire for an expensive new round of the arms race. America has always been first in the field of strategic weapons. The Soviet Union has been forced to scramble and sacrifice to catch up. There is now something like strategic parity between the two sides. The Soviet Union is willing to negotiate reductions in nuclear arms down to zero, but not unequally. The Soviet Union will never allow itself to be inferior again. If the Americans go forward with new strategic programs, the Soviets will tighten their belts and match us weapon for weapon.

I also heard several secondary lines—on Afghanistan, for example. Time after time I was told that Moscow would love to get out of Afghanistan, but can't so long as the Afghan rebellion continues. Why not? I asked repeatedly. It's their country, let them settle it. The answer was always the same: the Soviet Union has a long border with Afghanistan; back in 1979, the United States was planning a takeover to replace the bases and intelligence facilities lost in Iran; the rebels were getting arms from China and the U.S.; the rebels were led by "feudal reactionaries"; and besides—what can you do when your neighbor says his house is on fire and begs for help?

This line clearly suggests that the Soviet Union plans to go on fighting in Afghanistan until it wins—the standard approach taken by any Great Power, once it has committed its troops and its prestige. During the Vietnam War, the United States said much the same sort of thing: happy to go home as soon as the war is over. That's not the only parallel. We got into these wars for similar reasons—to back up a faltering client. We seem to have been responding to the same concerns—what allies would think abroad, and what hard-liners would say at home. In both cases inconvenient national leaders in the client states were murdered. Neither resistance movement could hope to win on the battlefield. The Soviet military, like the American military before it, appears to think of the war as a kind of laboratory for new weapons and tactics. Like the U.S. in Vietnam, Russia fervently proclaims its peaceful intent in Afghanistan. One of the few real differences is that the Soviet Union openly supported Hanoi with money and arms in generous measure, whereas the United States trickles arms to the Afghans while officially pretending to be doing nothing of the kind. I mentioned these points during a meeting with the editorial board of *Oktyabr* and asked why I always got the same responses to questions about Afghanistan. When the subject was missilery and the Geneva talks, I was willing to concede faults on my side. Why did I never hear so much as a whisper of doubt on theirs? The American withdrawal from Vietnam required years of painful self-examination and a rupture between citizens and government. Were the Russians afraid to admit that something similar might be demanded of them? How could they reconcile all the talk of peace with a war of conquest in a neighboring country?

Six people were sitting around the table. I paused after each sentence to make sure Alexei translated the whole of it. The editors grew mournful and solemn. Like the other Russians I'd talked to, they hated the Afghanistan question. Even Alexander Prohanov looked ill. He had written a novel about the war, called *A Tree in Kabul*, which I later read. It was a shallow and slavish piece of work, filled with tractors and noble derring-do. When Alexei finished, the chief editor cleared his throat to answer. His voice was heavy with moral seriousness. There were certain points I had to understand: the Soviet Union has a long border with

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Afghanistan; back in 1979, the U.S. was looking for new bases to take the place of the ones in Iran; the rebels were being armed by China and the U.S.; the rebels were led by feudal reactionaries; and besides—what can you do when a neighbor's house is on fire and he begs for help?

In Russia one hears other secondary lines as well. The Soviet Union doesn't need another "independent peace movement," something that E. P. Thompson, in particular, has stressed in his writings about nuclear war. The Soviet Peace Committee *is* independent. Besides, the Soviets are for peace and disarmament *officially*. How can you improve on that? The "so-called" independent peace movement is nothing but a collection of malcontents and soreheads. E. P. Thompson is a notorious anti-Communist animated by rabid hatred of the Soviet Union. *Pravda* has never published one word about him, and never will. As lines go, this one is pretty irritating, implying as it does that independent peace movements are required only in the West, where the governments are all run by imperialists, Russophobes, and stooges of the arms industry. There was a line on the arms industry, too. In the West arms mean profits, whereas in Russia no one gets anything out of preparation for war. However, Western scholars have identified a Soviet arms industry that operates much like a free market, with competing design bureaus fighting for contracts to build missiles and aircraft. The line, of course, admits no such thing. Yet another line, pushed with unusual vigor, insists that the Soviets' SS-20 missile does not alter the nuclear balance in Europe but represents nothing more than a modernization of the old SS-4s and -5s—single-warhead, liquid-fueled, highly vulnerable weapons that have been pointed at the West since the 1950s. The SS-20 is just a better weapon—nothing new, no big deal. But, of course, any new, accurate, solid-fueled (hence quick to fire), MIRVed missile with three warheads that can hit anything from Russia to the mid-Atlantic *is* a big deal. I argued this at length with just about everybody. Was Russia trying to scare the living daylights out of Europe, as many Western analysts insist, as the first step in a process of "Finlandizing" Europe? Or was the SS-20 a mistake, a fruit of the restless compulsion to build weapons that has been characteristic of both sides over the past forty years, something the Russians had never expected to attract attention? No, no, my interlocutors insisted; it was just modernization, routine tinkering with the strategic arsenal. Back and forth we went.

Eventually I concluded that the SS-20 had a purpose all right, but not the one usually ascribed to it. NATO's forward-based systems had not been included in the first two rounds of SALT, and the Russians wanted them in. A new weapon threatening Europe, they figured, would force the agenda of any new talks—as it has in fact done. I tried out this interpretation on everyone who might really know what the Politburo had in mind when it decided to build and deploy the SS-20. I didn't expect explicit corroboration, but I hoped the answers might contain at least an echo of the truth. The point, after all, was not immaterial. The controversy over the SS-20 is serious. The weapon has been a driving force behind new strategic-weapons programs on both sides. If the Russians had simply stumbled into this situation, that would suggest that the arms race is truly blind on both sides—the "action-reaction phenomenon" that Robert McNamara cited in a speech back in 1967, when he was secretary of defense. But the Russians all looked blank. There was no "plan" behind the SS-20. The Politburo didn't have anything in mind. It was just modernization.

One day I saw something I'd missed before. I suppose it should have been obvious all along. These people *were* frightened. Unlike American officials, who are willing to entertain more or less any point of view, the Russians are ideologically rigid. As soon as the discussion refined itself to being a question of us against them, they refused to give an inch. Words of concession simply would not come. On Poland, on Afghanistan, on the SS-20, their government held the correct position, and that was that. Perhaps this rigidity helped blind me for a time to a more important difference between Russian and American officials. The Americans are reasonable, well informed, ready to crack a joke or bolster an argument with irony, and moderately forthcoming about the processes and the personalities of government—subjects the Russians never discuss at all. But above all, Americans are confident. Historical optimism is second nature to them: Don't worry, it is going to work out, nothing bad is going to happen.

This is not the characteristic Russian note. When Russians speak of a breakdown at Geneva, it is with genuine alarm. Things have slipped a long way since the détente of the early 1970s. Russians hoped that SALT and Brezhnev's successor would open a new era, one of parity and Great Power cooperation abroad, and economic development at home. But SALT was never ratified, the U.S. refuses to accept parity, the funds for new development must go to arms instead. When Russians speak of hope, they do so in voices heavy and wistful. "You have to have some hopes," said Stanislav Kondrashov, a journalist at *Izvestia*. "Who said hope is the last thing we bid farewell? How else can we live in this world?" I heard many Russians say they felt it would come to war in the end. I have *never* heard an American say this. I heard many Russians cite Chekhov's famous principle of dramaturgy: If there is a gun on the wall in the first act, it will fire in the third. I have *never* heard an American official or professional defense analyst speak in such fatalistic tones. One man even told me that the American nuclear buildup might force the Russians to launch a pre-emptive attack on the United States. Shocked, I asked Alexei to make sure that the man really meant what he said. At that point, he broke into English and insisted that "pre-emptive attack" was not a mistranslation. "It could happen," he said. "We could be forced to do it." He was a journalist, not a military officer. He did not know the details of Russian strategic planning. Still, even

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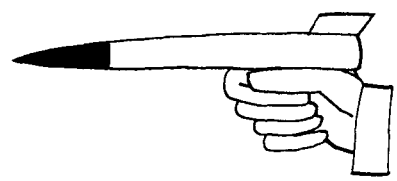
if it indicated only the depth of his own alarm, his statement was frightening.

The Russians I spoke to feel pushed and crowded. The Soviet Union has proven it is a power in the world; why can't America accept this, and deal with it as an equal? Russians frequently cite the American intervention in Russia in 1918 as proof of our long-standing animosity. They draw quick, rough maps of the Eurasian heartland, with bold "X"s marking the vast ring of American military bases surrounding the Soviet Union from Japan to Norway. Most of them insist that current American strategic programs are all aimed at building first-strike capability. Why else would the United States be committed to building the MX—a super-accurate weapon that is vulnerable and must therefore be fired first if it is to be fired at all? they ask. Why is the United States planning to deploy Pershing II missiles in Europe—also super-accurate weapons—only six minutes away from the Soviet missiles and command centers in western Russia? Why is the United States building super-accurate missiles for the new Trident submarines? It is well known that Soviet strategic weapons are mostly land-based, and that they can be threatened by accurate warheads. The Americans write about *limited* nuclear war and *selective* strikes against hard, well-protected military targets. They write about "decapitating" the Soviet Union with nuclear attacks on the institutions that run the country and on the civil-defense shelters where Soviet leaders plan to take refuge. For ten years the Americans have been bleating about the Soviet threat to American Minuteman missiles—a bare quarter of the U.S. strategic force—and citing this threat as proof that the Soviets are patiently preparing for the day when they can rule the world. These "suspicions" reveal what Washington is really thinking. Their own programs will threaten 75 percent of the Soviet strategic force. Are the Soviets to brush all this aside as just talk?

Russians insist that they will maintain parity now that they have finally achieved it. "Don't judge Russian missiles by your TV set," one said after I had told him that the set in my hotel room didn't work. "Some things we *can* do," he said. Some American experts think super-sophisticated new weapons systems may offer a genuine strategic edge; many doubt it. But none doubt that we can build some pretty fancy hardware if we decide to. Russians *say* they can, but with an air of determination, of sheer assertion, that sounded to me, after a while, uncertain. I think they're afraid that the Americans are going to spring a surprise—something so advanced, so magically versatile, so big and expensive, that the Soviet Union will suddenly find itself pushed back to 1950, trying to hide its weakness behind a curtain of secrecy. In Moscow, this self-doubt makes perfect sense. The city is clean and orderly, but decrepit and run-down. Clouds of oil smoke pour from the rattletrap cars, buses, and trucks. In GUM, the big department store on Red Square, the shoppers are crowded twenty deep around the counters. The imported radios and hi-fis sold only in foreign-currency shops cost a fortune. Everything has an archaic air, as if the Soviet Union were still struggling to do 1950 right. Russians see this clumsy backwardness too. Some take a perverse pride in it, as if it reflected a purity of spirit in contrast to the sybaritic materialism of the West. But more of them frankly admire the West. Despite all its sins, the West is *advanced*. So I was not surprised by the note of fear at the prospect of a new round of the arms race in the one field where Russians are weakest. Harold Brown, Carter's secretary of defense, once said, "Our technology is what will save us." The Russians fear that he is right. They fear that we might use a strategic advantage to push them around, or even to attack out of the blue. To an American, these Russian fears are especially unsettling. They are all based on what *we* write and do. I found myself trying to explain these things away as politics and idle theorizing, but the Russians, though polite, did not appear to be convinced.



IMAGINE, FOR A MOMENT, THAT THE EFFORTS OF THE peacemakers have failed and that a third world war has commenced. Imagine, also, that the nuclear arsenals of the Soviet Union and the United States are so evenly balanced that neither side dares to fire its missiles or drop its bombs. Imagine, further, that the main theater of conventional fighting is in central Europe, where the two sides have got most of their tanks and divisions, and that it has become clear the war is going to be a long one—just like the other two big wars of the century. Now take a look at the globe and pick out the probable peripheral theaters of the war. They make a long list, which would include areas of obvious strategic significance, like the Persian Gulf, as well as every country with a substantial Soviet presence. Among them would be Afghanistan, which is already the scene of fighting; China, which has been trumpeting the threat posed by Soviet hegemonists for twenty years; Vietnam, an ally of Moscow and the site of a major Soviet naval base; Cambodia, which is already the scene of fighting; Korea, unless the North elected to side with China; the Middle East, which is already the scene of fighting, including a major war between Iran and Iraq (although neither is currently an ally of the Soviet Union); Yemen; Ethiopia, which has a regime that depends on Soviet support; Angola, which is already the scene of fighting; Cuba; and Nicaragua, which is already the scene of fighting.

There are several things one might say about this list of

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probable theaters in a third world war that did not end in nuclear holocaust within a week or so. The most obvious is that fighting is already taking place in five of them, albeit at a low level, and that in all but one of them—the Gulf War—a main point of contention is Soviet influence. Another obvious point is that most of these theaters have become arenas of East–West conflict only since 1945. In 1939, the Soviet Union was weak and well hedged about; it was victory in the Second World War that opened the door for the recovery of territories Russia had lost in the First World War, that planted Russia's boots in the anterooms of the West, that left Russia without rival in Europe, and that willy-nilly gave it a role on the world stage. Yet another point, although one subject to endless contention, is that the expansion of Soviet influence is inextricable from the course of the Cold War—that is, the mutual fear that seems to have sprung up in an instant from the ashes of Berlin in 1945. The "ring of bases" of which Russia complains was the result of American fear of a new war. Soviet influence elsewhere in the world is the result of an attempt to leapfrog that ring. The attempt has not been notably successful. How many Cubas and Angolas, after all, would it take to offset the hostility of China? A final point to be made about the scope of a war between Russia and America is that it would be both too vast and too particular in its local details to be settled—if by that we mean settled in the way the question of German power was settled, *once and for all*—on anything but a global scale.

Putting the matter this way suggests that Russia is the problem, and that settling the problem would demand Russia's return to its snow and ice, in Napoleon's phrase. This remains the basic position of the West. But how is the West to force Russia into such a colossal retreat? In Washington, a small but currently influential circle believes that the Soviet Union is an empire of the nineteenth-century variety, the world's last; that its power rests on a frail economic base; and that it may already be in decline. Russia has no allies of importance; its clients in Eastern Europe hate its guts; it can sell nothing but arms and raw materials. No other country shows the slightest interest in Soviet "culture" or imitates Russia in anything whatever except the techniques of domestic coercion. Its scholars do not count for much even in the field of Marxist studies. The noted Soviet analyst Seweryn Bialer has said that if Russia did not possess nuclear weapons it would not even be classed as a major power.

Starting from these premises, some analysts believe that the Soviet Union can be forced into economic collapse, and thence into eclipse, by a combination of expensive arms-building and economic warfare. Reagan's former national security adviser, William Clark, once described the Soviet regime as an "evil and bizarre episode" in human history. The implications of the word *episode* can hardly be taken lightly in Moscow. When I saw Arbatov, he bitterly criticized the American "strategic" approach, as it is sometimes called. Despite its many critics in the United States, the strategic approach is nevertheless "taken seriously here," he said. "These troglodytic sentiments can be found even among the top people in your government. They seem to feel 'Maybe now at last the moment has come when we can do away with them [that is, the Soviets], or undermine them completely.' It explains this attempt to impose on us a much more costly arms race, to try to ruin us economically. Reagan's policy is close to economic warfare. He's trying to undermine our deals, close down our credits. We have to believe it [Reagan's commitment to the strategic approach] is serious. Only in the case if we are not strong enough will it take the form of outright war."

Other Russians addressed this question as well. The strategic approach seemed to baffle and to anger them in equal measure, and their comments all had a similar drift, as if to say, You're trying to destroy us—literally break up our state and change our whole government. You *admit* you're trying to destroy us. And you claim you are committed to peace? If that is peace, what is war?

There is no question that this policy can poison relations, but can it work? Russians insist that they can keep up indefinitely. The CIA recently published a paper claiming that the Soviet Union is less dependent on imports than any other major power, and history suggests that though the defense of empires can wreck economies, this process tends to take a long time, and the final push requires a war, or even a series of wars. Turkey was the "sick man of Europe" for a hundred years, but it held on to a vast empire until the First World War, and would have kept it longer if it had guessed that Britain, not Germany, would be the winner in 1918. The basic weakness of the strategic approach is the obvious one: it is transparently hostile, it precludes accommodation, it encourages arms-building, and the closer it comes to working, the greater the chance of war through fear and desperation.

In the opening pages of *The Peloponnesian War*, Thucydides offered a conventional account of the causes of the war that broke out in 431 B.C.—a typically muddled chain of action and reaction—but added that in his opinion the real cause was much simpler: it was Spartan fear of growing Athenian power. This fear had first been aroused forty-eight years earlier, at the end of the Greek allies' victorious war against the Persians, in 479 B.C., when Athens began to rebuild its city walls and decided to retain its wartime navy, the most powerful military force in Greece. These two facts poisoned the well, and the allies became rivals. Causes do not come much more basic than that.

The three Punic Wars, between Rome and Carthage, had similar roots. After the second Punic war, Cato the Censor, a Roman senator, was sent on a diplomatic mission to Carthage, where he was astonished to find that the city, far from being crippled by the reparations it had paid to Rome, was rapidly regaining its power. From that moment forward Cato added a sentence to the end of every speech

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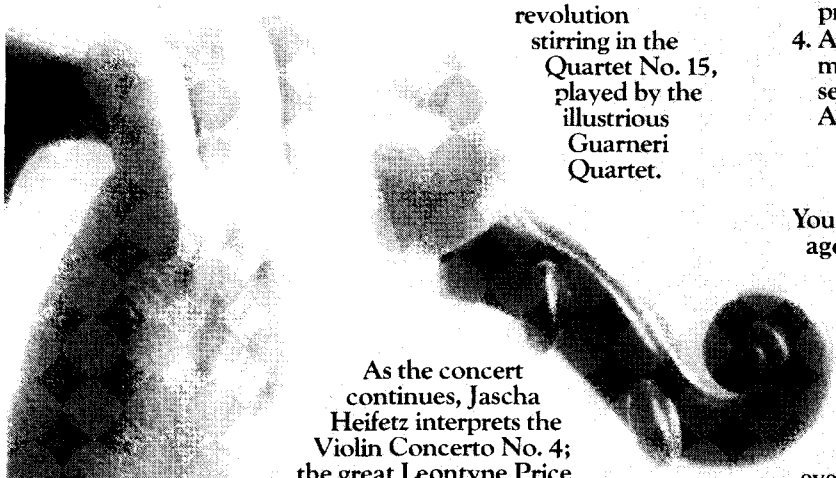

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he delivered in the Senate, whatever the ostensible subject: *"Delenda est Carthago"*—"Carthage must be destroyed." The history of the Punic Wars is also highly particular, with one "cause" for this one, and another for that. But the real cause of the wars was simpler—the fear aroused in each city by the power of the other. At the end of the third war, in 146 B.C., the Romans tore down the walls of Carthage, sold its citizens into slavery, and sowed the ground with salt.

This is one of the patterns of history: a city or nation rises to power, absorbs or threatens to absorb its neighbors, and finally collapses when it has aroused the fear of more enemies than it can handle. Spain in the sixteenth century, France in the early nineteenth, and Germany in the twentieth are notable examples. All three came close to establishing hegemony over Europe. All three were successfully opposed by Britain, in the last instance with the aid of the United States. Britain's policy had always been the simple one of seeking to prevent the domination of Europe by any single power. But the two wars with Germany destroyed Britain as a world power, and the United States took its place in the defense of Europe. Did Stalin dream of conquering the whole of the Continent? No one can say; Stalin kept his plans to himself. But what he did was enough. He imposed Soviet control over Eastern Europe, redrew its boundaries to his liking, and guaranteed the fact of possession with Russian armies.

The United States and Russia are both Great Powers of the traditional kind. Both have expanded rapidly, over the past two centuries, at the expense of weak neighbors; both are blessed with abundant natural resources; both draw their power from huge populations and economies; both are convinced that the destiny of the world is in their hands; and both are showing signs of the awful financial strain of sustaining a global conflict. For both sides the focus is Europe, where Russian and American armies face each other across the line established by the calamities of the Second World War. There the Americans are far from home but have friendly allies. The Russians are closer to home but must keep an eye on hostile clients. The question at the heart of the Cold War—the thing it is most nearly "about"—is which of these two armies will go home first. It is hard to imagine a confrontation with fewer exits.

The problem now is that the closing stages of the traditional pattern always involve great wars, but we—Russia and the West alike—cannot hope to gain from a great war. In the past, when somebody lost, somebody won. Now, nuclear weapons make that unlikely. The side closest to losing retains the power to drag down its rival with it. Many people grasped this point right away in 1945, when atomic weapons destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki—but, for the most part, national leaders did not. They thought we were smart enough to conduct a Great Power conflict without sliding into war. They still think so. As a result, we behave as Great Powers have always behaved—raising armies, seeking advantage, and supporting our demands with threats of war when conflict comes to crisis. The only difference now is that we tell ourselves it will never come to war in the end. It will just go on indefinitely.

In one of his essays, E. P. Thompson wrote, "If we ask the partisans of either side what the Cold War is now about, they regard us with the glazed eyes of addicts." I have found this to be true. Over the past year, I have asked perhaps a hundred people—Russians and Americans alike—what it is about. Of course, this is a hard question. I did not expect anyone to sort out the whole matter in an afternoon. But I had in mind a story, possibly apocryphal, I once read about the composer Stravinsky. He had written a new piece with a difficult violin passage. After it had been in rehearsal for several weeks, the solo violinist came to Stravinsky and said he was sorry, he had tried his best, the passage was too difficult, no violinist could play it. Stravinsky said, "I understand that. What I am after is the sound of someone *trying* to play it." I asked my question in that spirit.

But none of the people I approached showed anything more than a polite interest in the question. No one offered the sort of ready answer that suggested he had been thinking about it. No one found it easy to propose the name of someone who *might* have been thinking about it. Their eyes were not exactly glazed, but they were certainly blank. I had figured that the Russians, at least, would be quick to propose a dialectical interpretation. They were not. The few who alluded vaguely to history said all that was behind us now. The responses, after an awkward moment, were pretty much the same: *That's a very interesting question; we ought to concentrate more on that, I agree, yes, but the really pressing matter now is the question of the Euromissiles*—or something else of the kind. It was questions about hardware that interested them, or the details of negotiating positions, or the dangers posed to the fundamentals of deterrence by new weapons technology, or the rights and wrongs of the Soviet use of Cuban proxies in Angola and Ethiopia, or the slippage of Soviet control in Eastern Europe, or the motives behind the counterforce revolution in American military thinking. It is *process* that absorbs the managers and publicists of the Cold War—not words but the Great Game itself, not why we act but what we do. Things can go so terribly wrong tomorrow that it is hard to concentrate on anything but the awful dilemma of what to do today.

Thompson wrote in the essay quoted above, "What is the Cold War now about? It is about itself." I think Thompson is right, with one qualification: the Cold War has *always* been about itself. It's about what happened last week, and what we hope—or fear—will happen next week. The military power of the two sides is in constant flux. Today's allies may falter tomorrow. Each side feels that defeat on its periphery is a threat to its center. Both sides are incapable of explaining why things have to be this way, but act as if fate offered no alternative. When we ask

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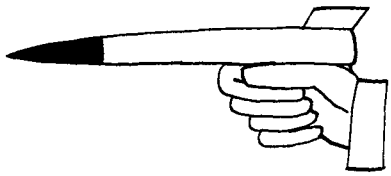
what this great struggle is about we betray our own helplessness. The answers are just words. For nearly forty years we have talked and talked without mitigating the danger that we will fight in the end. No single issue divides us, nothing we can settle through negotiation and compromise. It is only propagandists who insist that the history of the Cold War explains it. The problem at its heart is an elemental one. It is our nature that makes us draw lines in the earth and grimace when anyone approaches in strange garb, not some legalistic litany of rights threatened or violated. The Cold War has a new name, but it follows an old pattern. Among the things we seek or fear from this conflict there is not one on a scale even close to the scale of the war we are preparing to fight with each other. We are trapped in a tightening spiral of fear and hostility. We don't know why we have got into this situation, we don't know how to get out of it, and we have not found the humility to admit we don't know. In desperation, we simply try to manage our enmity from day to day. When Germany fell in 1945, only two Great Powers remained in the world—Russia and the United States. Only Russia has the power to threaten the United States. Only the United States has the power to threaten Russia. We fear each other. We wish each other ill. All the rest is detail.



I HAVE BEEN WRITING ABOUT THIS SUBJECT FOR THE past three years. It is a general rule that if you write about the topics of the day you will be asked to make speeches about them. It comes with the territory. When I'm asked, I always try to say yes. The basic point of my speeches is generally the same: this problem, while simple in essence, is multifaceted, it has deep roots, it is getting worse, and we are a long way down the road to a relationship so poisoned that it can never be set right. At the end of these speeches there are many questions. They range from the weapons themselves—what they're like, how they work, can they *really* hit a football field from the other side of the globe? (yes), and similar matters—to the inevitable "what about . . ." questions. These come in two types: What about Poland and Afghanistan? What about the Soviet military buildup? What about worldwide Marxist–Leninist revolution? What about the purges, Sakharov, Raoul Wallenberg? The second type focuses on us: What about "massive retaliation"? What about Vietnam and El Salvador? What about the American military buildup? What about the multinationals and the military-industrial complex? What about McCarthyism? What about Lumumba? The full list of questions is monstrous in length. The charges are all serious ones. Any able propagandist can draw up a damning indictment of either side. Ordinary citizens seem to think that the conflict must be about something and that we can solve it provided we can discover who is to blame. My own view is that attempts to fix blame get us nowhere. Many things are at stake in this conflict—indeed, *everything* is at stake—but they are not what it is about. The problem is not evil designs on either side but our complacency in hostility, our willingness to go on as we are, our reliance on threats of annihilation to save us from annihilation. These things are hard to say in two minutes. I answer as I can. Gradually people drift away.

But there is generally one last person with one last question, and I always know what it's going to be. I've been asked this question twenty times. I imagine that gypsy fortune-tellers hear something very similar. Somebody comes in—it's just for fun, he isn't superstitious, he doesn't believe in fortune-telling—and his very first question is: When will I die? The fortune-tellers must see it coming a mile away. I hate the one last question, but somebody always asks it: Are we going to have a war?

How am I to answer? I refuse to give any answer that depends on *if*: if we don't abandon the road we're on, if we don't learn to live with the Russians, if we can't see that the horrors of the Soviet system are *their* problem, if we don't realize that weapons threaten rather than defend, if we go on looking for a military solution, if we trust the managers who say everything is under control, if we refuse to see that it isn't all their fault, if we can't realize that we have got to solve this problem *together*, if men seeking power keep telling themselves there will always be time to set things right after the next election, if we go on clapping one another on the back at the end of each day of armed peace and saying "See? Deterrence works!" . . . The warnings are all old friends by now. We've been repeating them to one another for forty years. They are like a sacred text, promising that it can all be undone. Not one of them shows any sign whatever of being taken to heart by the only men who count—the budget-makers and diplomats who buy the arms and issue the white papers. Sometimes, after these people have returned to private life, they begin to sound worried themselves, and issue the very sort of troubled warnings that they ignored or explained away when they were still in office and might have done something. But perhaps the authority of office is illusory, and the choice was never there. Perhaps a nation in the grip of fear will always choose military power, no matter what. We have chosen power since 1945. We choose power now. I believe we are going to go on as we have done. The implications are clear. It doesn't take a prophet to see the end of a pattern so pronounced. But this last, awful question always comes from someone I've never met before; I'm not sure how he will fare on thin gruel. So I tell him I don't know. □

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HUNKTOWN

A SHORT STORY BY BOBBIE ANN MASON

JOANN NOTICED THAT HER DAUGHTER PATTY HAD started parting her hair on the left, so that it fell over the right side of her forehead, hiding the scar from her recent car accident.

"That scar doesn't show, Mom," said Patty, when she caught Joann looking. Patty had the baby on her hip, and her little girl, Kristi, was on the floor fooling with the cat.

"Where's Cody?" Patty asked.

"Gone to Nashville. He got tired of waiting for that big shot he met in Paducah to follow up on his word, so he's gone down with Will Ed and them to make a record album on his own." Joann's husband, Cody Swann, was going to make a record album. She could hardly believe it. Cody had always wanted to make a record album.

"Is it one of those deals where you pay the studio?" Patty asked suspiciously.

"He pays five hundred dollars for the studio, and then he gets ten percent after they sell the first thousand."

"That's a rip-off," said Patty. "Don't he know that? I saw that on *60 Minutes*."

"Well, he got tired of waiting to be discovered. You know how he is."

The baby, Rodney, started to cry, and Patty stuck a pacifier in his mouth. She said, "The thing is, will they distribute the record? Them companies get rich making records for every little two-bit band that can hitchhike to Nashville. And then they don't distribute the records."

"Cody says he can sell them to all his fans around here."

"He could sell them at the store," Patty said. She worked at a discount chain store.

"He took off this morning in that van with the muffler dragging. He had it wired up underneath and tied with a rope to the door handle on the passenger side."

"That sounds just like Cody. For God's sake, Kristi, what are you doing to that cat?"

Kristi had the cat upside down between her knees. "I'm counting her milkers. She's got four milkers."

"That's a tomcat, hon," said Joann gently.

Joann was taking her daughter shopping. Patty, who had gotten a ride to Joann's, was depending on her mother for transportation until the insurance money came through on her car. She had totaled it when she ran into a blue Buick, driven by an old woman on her way to a white sale in town. Patty's head had smashed against the steering wheel, and her face had been so bruised that for a while it resembled a ripe persimmon blackened by frost.

With the children in the back seat, Joann drove Patty around town on her errands. Patty didn't fasten her seat belt. She had had two wrecks before she was eighteen, but this latest accident was not her fault. Cody said Patty's middle name was Trouble. In high school, she became pregnant and had to get married, but a hay bale fell on her and caused a miscarriage. After that, she had two babies, but then she got divorced. Patty had a habit of flirting with Cody and teasing her mother for marrying such a good-looking man. Cody had grown up in a section of town known as Hunktown because so many handsome guys used to live there. That part of town—a couple of streets between Kroger's and the high school—was still known as Hunktown. The public-housing project and the new health clinic were there now. Recently, a revival of pride in Hunktown had developed, as though it had been designated a historic area, and Cody had a Hunktown T-shirt. He wore cowboy outfits, and he hung his hats in a row on the scalloped trim of the china cabinet that Joann had antiqued.

Joann had known Cody since high school, but they had married only three years ago. After eighteen years of marriage to Joe Murphy, Joann found herself without a man—one of those women whose husbands suddenly leave them for someone younger. Last year, Phil Donahue had a show on that theme, and Joann remembered Phil saying something ironic like "It looks like you've got to keep tap-dancing in your negligee or the son-of-a-gun is going to leave you." Joann was too indignant to sit around and feel sorry for herself. After filing for divorce, she got a new hairdo and new clothes and went out on weekends with some women. One night, she went to a place across the county line that sold liquor. Cody Swann was there, playing a fancy red electric guitar and singing about fickle women and trucks and heartache. At intermission, they reminisced about high school. Cody was divorced, and he had two grown children. Joann had two teenagers still living at home, and Patty had already left. In retrospect, Joann realized how impulsive their marriage had been, but she had been happy with Cody until he got laid off from his job,

Bobbie Ann Mason is the author of Shiloh and Other Stories.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY LOUIS ESCOBEDO

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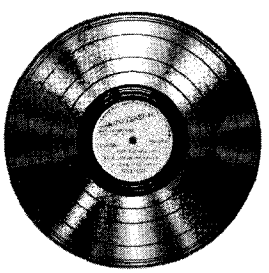
four months ago. He'd worked at the Crosbee plant, which manufactured electrical parts. Now he was drinking too much, but he assured Joann he couldn't possibly become an alcoholic on beer. Their situation was awkward, because she had a good job at the post office, and she knew he didn't like to depend on her. He had thrown himself into rehearsing for his album with his friends Will Ed and L.J. and Jimmy. "What we really need is a studio," Cody kept saying impatiently. They had been playing at county fairs and civic events around western Kentucky off and on for years. Every year, Cody played at the International Banana Festival, in Fulton, and recently he had played for the Wal-Mart grand opening and got a free toaster.

"Being out of work makes you lose your self-respect," Cody had told Joann matter-of-factly. "But I ain't going to let that happen to me. I've been fooling around too much. It's time to get serious about my singing."

"I don't want you to get your hopes up too much and then get disappointed," Joann said.

"Can't you imagine me with a television series? You could be on it with me. We'd play like we were Porter Wagoner and Dolly Parton. You could wear a big wig and balloons in your blouse."

"I can just see me—Miss Astor, in my plow shoes!" Joann said, squealing with laughter at the idea, playing along with Cody's dream.



"DO YOU CARE IF WE DRIVE OUT TO THAT TRUCK patch and pick a few turnip greens before I take you home?" Joann asked Patty. "It's on the way."

"You're the driver. Beggars can't be choosers." Patty rummaged around on the floor under the bucket seat and found Rodney's pacifier, peppered with tobacco and dirt. She wiped it on her jeans and jammed it into the baby's mouth.

On the CB, a woman suddenly said, "Hey, Tomcat, you lost something back here. Come in, Tomcat. Over." A spurt of static followed. The woman said, "Tomcat, it looks like a big old sack of feed. You better get in reverse."

"She's trying to get something started with those cute guys in that green pickup we passed," Patty said.

"Everybody's on the make," Joann said uneasily. She knew what that was like.

At the truck patch, Patty stood there awkwardly in her high heels, like a scarecrow planted in the dirt.

"Let me show you how to pick turnip greens," Joann said. "Gather them like this. Just break them off partway down the stem, and clutch them in your hand till you get a big wad. Then pack them down in the sack."

"They're fuzzy, and they sting my hands. Is this a turnip green or a weed?" Patty held up a leaf.

"That's mustard. Go ahead and pick it. Mustard's good." Joann flicked the greens off expertly. "Don't get down into the stalk," she said. "And they wilt down when they're cooked, so pack them real good."

Kristi was looking for bugs, and Rodney was asleep in the car. Joann bent over, grabbing the greens. Some of the turnips were large enough to pull, their bulbs showing aboveground like lavender pomanders. The okra plants in a row next to the turnip patch were as tall as corn, with yellow blossoms like roses. Where the blossoms had shriveled, the new okras thrust their points skyward. Joann felt the bright dizziness of the Indian-summer day, and she remembered many times when nothing had seemed important except picking turnip greens. She and Cody had lived on her parents' farm since her father died, two years before, but they had let it go. Cody wasn't a farmer. The field where her father used to grow turnips was wild now, spotted with burdock and thistles, and Cody was away in Nashville, seeking fame.

At a shed on the edge of the patch, Joann paid for the turnip greens and bought half a bushel of sweet potatoes from a black man in overalls, who was selling them from the back end of a pickup truck. The man measured the sweet potatoes in a half-bushel basket, then transferred them to grocery sacks. When he packed the sweet potatoes in the basket, he placed them so that their curves fit into one another, filling up the spaces. The man's carefulness was like Cody's when he was taping, recording a song over and over again. But Cody had tilled the garden last week in such a hurry that it looked as though cows had trampled the ground.

The man was saying, "When you get home with these, lay them in a basket and don't stir them. The sweet will settle in them, but if you disturb them, it will go away. Use them off the top. Don't root around in them."

"I'll put them in the basement," Joann said, as he set the sacks into her trunk. She said to Patty, who was concentrating on a hangnail, "Sweet potatoes are hard to keep. They mold on you."

THAT EVENING, JOANN DISCOVERED ONE OF CODY'S tapes that she had not heard before. On the tape, he sang a Webb Pierce song, "There Stands the Glass," that used to make her cry, the way Cody sang it so convincingly. When Cody sang "The Wild Side of Life" on the tape, Joann recalled Kitty Wells's answer to that song. "It wasn't God who made honky-tonk angels," Kitty Wells had insisted, blaming unfaithful men for every woman's heartbreak. Joann admired the way Kitty Wells sang the song so matter-of-factly, transcending her pain. A man wrote that

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song, Cody had told her. Joann wondered if he was being unfaithful in Nashville. She regarded the idea in a detached way, the way she would look at a cabbage at Kroger's.

Now Cody was singing an unfamiliar song. Joann rewound the tape and listened.

> "I was born in a place they call Hunktown,
> Good-lookin's my middle name—"

The song startled her. He had been talking about writing his own material, and he had started throwing around terms like "backup vocals" and "sound mixing." In this song, he sang along with himself to get a multiple-voice effect. The song was a lonesome tune about being a misfit. It sounded strangely insincere.

When Cody returned from Nashville, his voice bubbled along enthusiastically, like a toilet tank that ran until the handle was jiggled. He had been drinking. Joann had missed him, but she realized she hadn't missed his hat. It was the one with the pheasant feathers. He hung it on the china cabinet again. Cody was happy. In Nashville, he had eaten surf-and-turf, toured the Ryman Auditorium, and met a guy who had once been a sideman for Ernest Tubb.

"And here's the best part," said Cody, smacking Joann on the lips again. She got a taste of his mint-flavored snuff. "We got a job playing at a little bar in Nashville on weekends. It just came out of the blue. Jimmy can't do it, because his daddy's real bad off, but Will Ed and L.J. and me could go. Their wives already said they could."

"What makes you think I'll let you?" she said, teasing.

"You're going with me."

"But I've got too much to do." She set his boots on a carpet sample near the door to the porch. Cold air was coming through the crack around the facing. Cody had pieced part of the facing with a broken yardstick when he installed the door, but he had neglected to finish the job.

Cody said, "It's just a little bar with a little stage and this great guy that runs it. He's got a motel next to it and we can stay free. Hey, we can live it up in Nashville! We can watch Home Box Office and everything."

"How can I go? Late beans are coming in, and all them tomatoes."

"This is my big chance! Don't you think I sing good?"

"You're as good as anybody on the *Grand Ole Opry*."

"Well, there you go," he said confidently.

"Patty says those studio deals are rip-offs. She saw it on *60 Minutes*."

"I don't care. The most I can lose is five hundred dollars. And at least I'll have a record album. I'm going to frame the cover and put it in the den."

In bed, they lay curled together, like sweet potatoes. Joann listened to Cody describe how they had made the album, laying down separate tracks and mixing the sound. Each little operation was done separately. They didn't just go into a studio and sing a song, Joann realized. They patched together layers of sound. She didn't mention the new song she had heard. She had put the tape back where she had found it. Now another of Cody's tapes was playing—"I'd Rather Die Young," a love song that seemed to have pointless suffering in it. Softly, Cody sang along with his taped voice. This was called a backup vocal, Joann reminded herself, trying to be very careful, taking one step at a time. Still, the idea of his singing with himself made her think of something self-indulgent and private, like masturbation. But country music was always like that, so personal.

"I'm glad you're home," she said, reaching for him.

"The muffler fell off about halfway home," Cody said with a sudden hoot of laughter that made the covers quiver. "But we didn't get caught. I don't know why, though. It's as loud as a hundred amplifiers."

"HOLD STILL," JOANN SAID. "YOU'RE JUST LIKE A wiggle-worm in hot ashes."

Cody was trying on his new outfit for the show, and Joann had the sewing machine out, to alter the pants. The pants resembled suede and had fringe.

"They feel tight in the crotch," Cody said. "But they didn't have the next size."

"Are you going to tell me what you paid for them?"

"I didn't pay for them. I charged them at Penney's."

Joann turned the hem up and jerked it forward so that it fell against his boot. "Is that too short?" she asked.

"Just a little longer."

Joann pulled the hem down about a quarter-inch and pinned it. "Turn around," she said.

The pants were tan with dark-brown stitching. The vest was embroidered with butterflies. Cody turned around and around, examining himself in the long mirror.

"You look wonderful," she said.

He said, "We may get deeper in debt before it's over with, but one thing I've learned: You can't live with regret. You have to get on with your life. I know it's a big risk I'm taking, but I don't want to go around feeling sorry for myself because I've wasted so much time. And if I fail, at least I will have tried."

He sat on the bed and pulled his boots and then his pants off. The pants were too tight, but the seams were narrow, and there was no way Joann could let them out.

"You'll have to do something about that beer gut," she said.

THE BLUEBIRD LOUNGE LOOKED AS INNOCENT AS someone's kitchen: all new inside, with a country decor—old lanterns, gingham curtains, and a wagon wheel on the ceiling. It seemed odd to Joann that Cody had said he didn't want to live with regret, because his theme was country memories. He opened with "Walking the Floor Over You," then eased into "Your Cheatin'

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Heart," "The Wild Side of Life," and "I'd Rather Die Young." He didn't sing the new song she had heard on the tape, and she decided that he must be embarrassed by it. She liked his new Marty Robbins medley, a tribute to the late singer, though she had always detested the song "El Paso." In the pleasant atmosphere of the bar, Cody's voice sounded professional, more real there, somehow, than at home. Joann felt proud. She laughed when Will Ed and L.J. goofed around onstage, tripping over their electric cords and repeating things they had heard on *Hee Haw*. L.J. had been kidding Joann, saying, "You better come to Nashville with us to keep the girls from falling all over Cody." Now Joann noticed the women, in twos and threes, sitting close to the stage, and she remembered the time she went across the county line and heard Cody sing. He still looked boyish, and he didn't have a single gray hair. She had cut his bangs too short, she realized now.

"They're really good," the cocktail waitress, Debbie, a slim, pretty woman in an embroidered cowboy shirt, said to Joann. "Most of the bands they get in here are so bad they really bum me out, but these guys are good."

"Cody just cut an album," Joann said proudly.

Debbie was friendly, and Joann felt comfortable with her, even though Debbie was only a little older than Patty. By the second night, Joann and Debbie were confiding in each other and trading notes on their hair. Joann's permanent was growing out strangely, and she was afraid getting a new permanent so soon would damage her hair, but Debbie got a permanent every three months and her hair stayed soft and manageable. In the restroom, Debbie fluffed her hair with her fingers and said, looking into the mirror, "I reckon I better put on some lipstick to keep the mortician away."

During the intermission, Debbie brought Joann a free tequila sunrise at her corner table. Cody was drinking beer at the bar with some musicians he had met.

"You've got a good-looking guy," Debbie said.

"He knows it, too," said Joann.

"He'd be blind if he didn't. It must be hard to be married to a guy like that."

"It wasn't so hard till he lost his job and got this notion that he has to get on the *Grand Ole Opry*."

"Well, he just might do it. He's good." Debbie told her about a man who had been in the bar once. He turned out to be a talent scout from a record company. "I wish I could remember his name," she said.

"I wish Cody would sing his Elvis songs," Joann said. "He can curl his lip exactly like Elvis, but he says he respects the memory of Elvis too much to do an Elvis act like everybody's doing. It would be exploitation."

"Cody sure is full of sad, lonesome songs," Debbie said. "You can tell he's a guy who's been through a lot. I always study people's faces. I'm fascinated by human nature."

"He went through a bad divorce," Joann said. "But right now he's acting like a kid."

"Men are such little boys," Debbie said knowingly.

Joann saw Cody talking with the men. Their behavior was easygoing, full of laughter. Women were so intense together. Joann could feel Cody's jubilation all the way across the room. It showed in the energetic way he sang the mournful music of all the old hillbilly singers.

Debbie said, "Making music must make you feel free. If I could make music, I'd feel that life was one big jam session."

COMING HOME ON SUNDAY WAS DISORIENTING. THE cat looked impatient with them. The weather was changing, and the flowers were dying. Joann had meant to take the potted plants into the basement for the winter. There had been a cold snap, but not a killing frost. The garden was still producing, languidly, after a spurt of growth during the last spell of warm weather. After work, during the week, Joann gathered in lima beans and squash and dozens of new green tomatoes. She picked handfuls of dried Kentucky Wonder pole beans to save for seed. Burrs clung to the cuffs of her jeans. Her father used to fight the burdock, knowing that one plant could soon take over a field.

Cody stayed indoors, listening to tapes and playing his guitar. He collected his unemployment check, but when someone called about a job opening, he didn't go. As she worked in the garden, Joann tried to take out her anger on the dying plants that she pulled from the soil. She felt she had to hurry. Fall weather always filled her with a sense of urgency.

Patty stopped by in her new Lynx. She had come out ahead on the insurance deal. Cody paraded around the car, admiring it, stroking the fenders.

"When's your album coming out, Cody?" Patty asked.

"Any day now."

"I asked at the store if they could get it, but they said it would have to be nationally distributed for them to carry it."

"Do you want a mess of lima beans, Patty?" Joann asked. "There's not enough for a canning, so I'll let you have them."

"No, this bunch won't eat any beans but jelly beans." Patty turned to Cody, who was peering under the hood of her car. "I told all the girls at work about your album, Cody. We can't wait to hear it. What's on it?"

"It's a surprise," he said, looking up. "They swore I'd have it by Christmas. The assistant manager of the studio

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said he thought it was going to be big. He told that to the Oak Ridge Boys and he was right."

"Wow," said Patty.

When Cody patted the pinch of snuff under his lip, she said, "I think snuff's kind of sexy."

Joann hauled the baby out of the car seat and bounced him playfully on her shoulder. "Who's precious?" she asked the baby.

IN THE VAN ON THE WAY TO NASHVILLE THAT FRIday, they sang gospel songs, changing the words crazily. "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" became "Sweet 'n Low, Mr. Coffee pot, perking for to hurry my heart." Cody drove, and Joann sat in the back, where she could manage the food. She passed out beer and the sandwiches she had made before work that morning. She had been looking forward to the weekend, hoping to talk things over with Debbie.

Will Ed sat in the back with Joann, complaining about his wife, who was taking an interior-decorating course by correspondence. "She could come with us, but instead she wants to stay home and rearrange the furniture. I'm afraid to go home in the dark. I don't know where to walk." He added with a laugh, "And I don't know *who* I might stumble over."

"Joyce wouldn't cheat on you," said Joann.

"What do you think all these songs we sing are about?" he asked.

At that moment, Cody was humming "Pop A Top," a song about a wandering wife. He reached back for another beer, and Joann pulled the tab off for him. Cody set the can between his legs and said, "Poor Joann here's afraid we're going to get corrupted. She thinks I ought to be home spreading manure and milking cows."

"Don't 'poor Joann' me. I can take care of myself."

Cody laughed. "If men weren't tied down by women, what do you reckon they'd do with themselves? If they didn't have kids, a house, installments to pay?"

"Men want to marry and have a home just as much as women do, or they wouldn't do it," Joann said.

"Tell him, Joann," said L.J.

"Listen to this," said Will Ed. "I asked Joyce what was for supper? And she says, '*I'm* having a hamburger. What are *you* going to have?' I mean you can't say a word now without 'em jumping on you."

"Y'all shut up," said Joann. "Let's sing another song. Let's sing 'The Old Rugged Cross.'"

"The old rugged cross" turned into "an old Chevrolet," a forlorn image, it seemed to Joann, like something of quality lost in the past. She imagined a handsome 1957 Chevrolet, its fins slashed by silver arrows, standing splendidly on top of a mountain.

"This is better than showing up at the plant with a lunch box!" Cody cried. "Ain't it, boys?" He blasted the horn twice at the empty highway and broke into joyous song.

AT THE BLUEBIRD, JOANN DRANK THE TEQUILA sunrises Debbie brought her. The drink was pretty, with an orange slice—a rising sun—on the rim of the glass. Between customers, Debbie sat with Joann and they talked about life. Debbie knew a lot about human nature, though Joann wasn't sure Debbie was right about Cody being a man who suffered. "If he's suffering, it's because I'm bringing in the paycheck," she said. "But instead of looking for work, he's singing songs."

"He's going through the change," Debbie said. "Men go through it too. He's afraid he's missed out on life. I've seen a lot of guys like that."

"I don't understand what's happening to people, the way they can't hold together anymore," Joann said. "My daughter's divorced, and I think it's just now hitting me that I got divorced too. In my first marriage, I got shafted—eighteen years with a man, working my fingers to the bone, raising three kids—but I didn't make a federal case out of it. I was lucky Cody came along. Cody says don't live with regret, but it's awful hard to look forward when there's so little you can depend on."

Debbie jumped up to get a draft beer for a man who signaled her. When she returned, she suddenly confessed to Joann, "I had my tubes tied—but I was such an idiot! And now I've met this new guy and he doesn't know. I think I'm serious about him, but I haven't got the heart to tell him what I did."

"When did you have it done?" Joann cried, horrified.

"Last spring." She lit a cigarette and exhaled smoke furiously. "You know why I got my tubes tied? Because I hate to be categorized. My ex-husband thought I had to have supper on the table at six on the dot, when he came home. I was working too, and I got home about five-thirty. I had to do all the shopping and cleaning and cooking. I hate it when people *assume* things like that—that I'm the one to make supper because I've got reproductive organs."

"I never thought of it that way exactly."

"I was going to add kids to those responsibilities? Like hell." Debbie punched holes in a cocktail napkin with her ballpoint pen. The napkin had jokes printed on it and she punched out the jokes. "It's the little things," she said. "I don't care about equal pay as much as I care about people judging me by the way I keep house. It's nobody's damn business how I keep house."

Joann had never heard of anything like what Debbie had done. She hadn't known a woman would go that far to make a point to a man. Later, Debbie said, "You don't know what problems are till you go through tubal litigation." Joann had a feeling that that was the wrong term, but she didn't want to mention it.

"I hate to see you so upset," Joann said. "What can I do?"

"Tell them to stop playing those lovesick songs. All these country songs are so stupid. They tell you to stand by your man, but then they say he's just going to use you somehow."

Joann thought she understood how Debbie felt about telling her new boyfriend what she had done. It seemed

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like a dreadful secret. Debbie had had her tubes tied rather than tell her husband in plain English to treat her better. The country songs were open and confessional, but in reality people kept things to themselves. The songs were an invasion of privacy. Debbie must have felt something like that about her housekeeping and her husband's demands. Debbie should have sung a song about it, instead of getting herself butchered, Joann thought. But maybe Debbie couldn't sing. Joann was getting drunk.

The next afternoon, at the motel, Cody said to Joann, "They want us to play five nights a week at the bar. They've guaranteed me six months." He was smiling and slamming things around happily. He had just brought in some Cokes and Big Macs. "Will Ed and L.J. have to stay home and work, but I can get some backup men from here, easy. We could get a little apartment down here and put the house up for sale."

"I don't want to sell Daddy's place." Joann's stomach was churning.

"Well, we ain't doing nothing with it."

"They say they're going to hire again at the plant in the spring," Joann said.

"To hell with the plant. I gave 'em nineteen years and six months of my life and they cut me off without a pension. Screw *them*."

POEMS

BY HARVEY SHAPIRO

THINGS SEEN

There is no natural scenery like this:
when her loose gown from her shoulders
falls, the light hardens, shadows
move slowly, my breath catches.

The flame of the blue cornflower,
a half inch above the flower,
fanned by wind.

GETTING THROUGH THE DAY

The old woman
humming, coming
up the subway steps,
one hum
for each step.

Joann placed the Big Macs and Cokes on a tray. She and Cody sat on one of the two beds to eat. She nibbled at her hamburger. "You're telling me to quit my job," she said.

"You could find something in Nashville."

"And be a cocktail waitress like Debbie? No, thanks. That's a rough life. I like my job and I'm lucky to have it."

On TV, a preacher was yelling about reservations for heaven. Cody got up and flipped the dial, testing all the channels. "Just look how many TV channels we could get if we lived down here," he said.

"DON'T DO IT, JOANN," DEBBIE SAID FLATLY that evening.

"Cody and I haven't been together that long," Joann said. "Sometimes I feel I don't even know him. We're still in that stage where I ought to be giving him encouragement, the way you should do when you're starting out with somebody." She added, sarcastically, "Stand by your man."

"We're always caught in one cliché or another," Debbie said. "But you've got to think about yourself, Joann."

"I should give him more of a chance. He's got his heart set on this, and I'm being so contrary."

"But look what he's asking you to do, girl! Look what-all you've worked for. You've got your daddy's homeplace and that good job. You don't want to lose all that."

"We wouldn't come out ahead, after we pay off the mortgage. Maybe he wants to move to Nashville because there's ninety-nine TV stations to choose from. Well, the cable's coming down our road next year, and we'll have ten channels. That's enough television for anybody. They're bidding on the franchise now."

"I never watch television," Debbie said. "I can't stand watching stuff that's straight out of my own life."

AT HOME, CODY WAS RESTLESS, FULL OF NERVOUS energy. He repaired some fences, as if getting the place ready to sell, but Joann hadn't agreed to anything. In the den one evening, after *Dynasty* had ended, Cody turned the sound down and said, "Let's talk, Jo." She waited while he opened a beer. He had been drinking beer after beer, methodically. "I've been thinking a lot about the way things are going, and I feel bad about how I used to treat my first wife, Charlene. I'm afraid I'm doing you the same way."

"You don't treat me bad," Joann said.

"I've taken advantage of you, letting you pay all the bills. I know I should get a job, but, damn it, there's got to be more to life than punching a time clock. I think I always expected a lot more out of life than most people. I used to be a real hell-raiser. I thought I could get away with anything because people always gave me things. All my life, people gave me things."

"What things?" Joann was sitting on the couch and Cody

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was in the easy chair. The only light came from the television.

"In grade school, I'd get more Valentines than anybody, and the Valentines would have candy in them, little hearts with messages like 'Be Mine' and 'Cutie' and things like that. When I graduated from high school, all the storekeepers in town gave me stuff and took me in their back rooms and gave me whiskey. I had my first drink in the pharmacy in the back of the Rexall. I just breezed through life, letting people give me things, and it didn't dawn on me for a long time that people wanted something back. They expected something from me and I never gave it to them. I didn't live up to their expectations. Somehow, I want to give something back."

"People always admired you, Cody. You're so good-natured. Isn't that giving something?"

Cody belched loudly and laughed. "When I was about twelve, a man gave me five dollars to jack him off in the alley behind the old A&P."

"Did you do it?"

"Yep. And I didn't think a thing about it. I just did it. Five bucks was five bucks."

"Well, what do you owe *him*?" Joann said sharply.

"Nothing, I reckon, but the point is, I did a lot of stuff that wasn't right. Charlene was always thumping the Bible and hauling me off to church. I couldn't live with that. I treated her like dirt, the way I cheated on her. I always wanted what was free and available. It was what I was used to. I had a chance once, about fifteen years ago, to play in a little bar in Nashville, but the kids were little, and Charlene didn't want me to go. I've regretted that to this day. Don't you see why this chance means so much to me? I'm trying to *give* something of myself, instead of always taking. Just go along with me, Joann. Take this one risk with me."

"What can I say when you put it that way?"

"A person has to follow his dream."

"That sounds like some Elvis song," she said, sounding unexpectedly sarcastic. She was thinking of Elvis's last few years, when he got fat and corrupted. She rearranged some pillows on the couch. The weather news was on TV. The radar was showing rain in their area. Slowly, her eyes on the flashing lines of the radar map, she said, "What you want to do is be in the spotlight so people can adore you. That's the same thing as taking what's free."

"That's not true. Maybe you think it's easy to be in the spotlight. But it's not. Look what happened to Elvis."

"You're not Elvis. And selling the place is too extreme. Things can't be all one way or the other. There has to be some of both. That's what life is, when it's any good." Joann felt drained, as though she had just had to figure out all of life, like doing a complicated math problem in her head.

Cody turned the TV off and the light vanished. In the dark, he said, "I cheated on Charlene, but I never cheated on you."

"I never said you did."

"But you expect it," he said.

PATTY CAME OVER TO ASK JOANN TO KEEP THE KIDS that weekend. She had a new boyfriend who was taking her to St. Louis.

"If I can take 'em to Nashville," Joann told Patty. "I have to go along to keep the girls away from Cody." She looked meaningfully at Cody.

It was meant to be a casual, teasing remark, she thought, but it didn't come out that way. Cody glared at her, looking hurt.

"The kids will be in the way," he said. "You can't take them to the Bluebird Lounge."

"We'll stay in the motel room," Joann said. "I wanted to watch *On Golden Pond* on HBO anyway. Nashville has so much more to offer. Remember?"

She realized that taking the children to Nashville was a bad idea, but she felt she had to go with Cody. She didn't know what might happen. She hoped that having the kids along would make her and Cody feel they had a family to be responsible for. Besides, Patty was neglecting the kids. Joann had kept them three nights in a row last week while Patty went out with her new boyfriend.

In the van on the way down, Rodney cried because he was teething, and L.J. gave him a piece of rawhide to chew on. Kristi played with a bucket of plastic toys. Will Ed practiced the middle eight of a new song they had learned. It seemed pointless to Joann, since Cody planned to dump Will Ed and L.J. from his act. Will Ed played the passage over and over on his guitar, until Kristi screamed, "Shut up!" Cody said little. L.J. was driving, because Joann didn't want Cody to drive and drink beer, with the children along.

Daylight saving time had ended and the dark came early. The bright lights at the edge of Nashville reminded Joann of how soon Christmas was.

She liked being alone in the motel room with the kids. It made her think of when she'd had small children and her first husband had worked a night shift. She had always tried to be quiet around sleeping children, but nowadays children had more tolerance for noise. The TV didn't bother them. She sat in bed, propped against pillows. The children were asleep. In the large mirror facing the bed, she could see herself, watching TV, with the sleeping bundles beside her. Joann felt expectant, as if some easy answers were waiting for her—from the movie, from the innocence of the children.

Suddenly Kristi sat straight up and shouted, "Where's Mommy?"

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"Hush, Kristi! Mommy's gone to St. Louis. We'll see her Sunday."

Kristi hurled herself out of bed and ran around the room. She looked in the closet and in the bathroom. Then she began to shriek. Joann grabbed her and whispered, "Shush, you'll wake up your little brother!"

Kristi wiggled away from her and looked under the bed, but the bed was boxed in—a brilliant construction, Joann thought, so far as cleaning was concerned. Kristi bumped into a chair and fell down. She began bawling. Rodney stirred, and then he started to cry. Joann huddled both children in the center of the bed and began singing to them. She couldn't think of anything to sing except the Kitty Wells song about honky-tonk angels. The song was an absurd one to sing to kids, but she sang it anyway. It was her life. She sang it like an innocent bystander, angry that that was the way women were, that they looked on approvingly while some man went out and either did something big or made a fool of himself trying.

When Cody came in later, she had fallen asleep with the children. She woke up and glanced at the travel alarm. It was three. The TV was still on. Cody was missing the Burt Reynolds movie he had wanted to watch. He stumbled into the bathroom and then fell into the other bed with all his clothes on.

"I was rehearsing with those new guys," he said. "And then we went out to eat something." Joann heard his boots fall to the floor, and he said, "I called home around ten-thirty, between shows, to wish Mama a happy birthday, and she told me Daddy's in the Memphis hospital."

"Oh, what's wrong?" Joann sat up and pulled her pillow behind her. Cody's father, who was almost seventy-five, had always bragged about never being sick.

"It's cancer. He had some tests done. They never told me anything." Cody flung his shirt to the foot of the bed. "Lung cancer comes on sudden. They're going to operate next week."

"I was *so* afraid of that," Joann said. "The way he smoked."

Cody turned to face her across the aisle between the two beds. He reached over and searched for her hand. "I'll have to go to Memphis tomorrow night after the show. Mama's going down tomorrow."

Rodney squirmed beside Joann, and she pulled the covers around his shoulders. Then she crept into bed with Cody and lay close to him while he went on talking in a tone of disbelief about his father. "It makes me mad that I forgot it was Mama's birthday. I thought of it during the first show, when I was singing 'Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain.' I don't know how come me to think of it then."

"Do you want me to go to Memphis with you?"

"No. That's all right. You have to get the kids home. I'll take the bus and then come back here for the show Tuesday." Cody drew her near him. "Were you going to come back here with me?"

"I've been thinking about that. I don't want to quit my job or sell Daddy's place. That would be crazy."

"Sometimes it's good to act a little crazy."

"No. We have to reason things out, so we don't ruin anything between us." She was half-whispering, trying not to wake the children, and her voice trembled as though she were having a chill. "I think you should come down here by yourself first and see how it works out."

"What if my album's a big hit and we make a million dollars?" His eyes were on the TV. Burt Reynolds was speeding down an interstate.

"That would be different."

"Would you move to Nashville if I got on the *Grand Ole Opry*?"

"Yes."

"Is that a promise?"

"Yes."

On Monday, Cody was still in Memphis. The operation was the next day, and Joann took off from work early in order to go down to be with Cody and his parents. She was ready to leave the house when the delivery truck brought the shipment of record albums. The driver brought two boxes, marked "1 of 3" and "2 of 3."

"I'll bring the third box tomorrow," the driver said. "We're not allowed to bring three at once."

"Why's that?" Joann asked, shivering in the open doorway to the porch.

"They want to keep us moving."

"Well, I don't understand that one bit."

Joann shoved the boxes across the threshold and closed the door. With a butcher knife, she ripped open one of the boxes and slipped out a record album. On the cover was a photograph of Cody and Will Ed and L.J. and Jimmy, sitting on a bench. Above them, the title of the album was a red-and-blue neon sign: HUNKTOWN. Cody and his friends were all wearing Hunktown T-shirts, cowboy boots, and cowboy hats. They had a casual, slouchy look, like the group called Alabama. It was a terrible picture. Looking at her husband, Joann thought no one would say he was really handsome. She held the cover up to the glass door to get a better light on his face. He looked old. His expression seemed serious and unforgiving, as though he expected the world to be ready for him, as though this were his revenge, not his gift. That face was now on a thousand albums.

But the picture was not really Cody at all, she thought. It was only his wild side, not the part she loved. Seeing it was something like identifying a dead body: it was so unfamiliar that death was somehow acceptable. She had to laugh. Cody had meant the album to be a surprise, but he would be surprised to see how he looked.

Joann heard a noise outside. She touched her nose to the door glass and left a smudge. On the porch, the impatiens in a hanging basket had died in the recent freeze. She had forgotten to bring the plant inside. Now she watched it sway and twist in a little whirl of wind. □

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A failure to pursue basic plant science may imperil the pre-eminence of American agriculture

TROUBLE AMID PLENTY

BY STEPHEN BUDIANSKY

IN 1887, WHEN SCIENCE WAS STILL THE DOMAIN OF intellectually curious gentlemen of independent means and government funding of research was nearly as bizarre a notion as a tax on income, the U.S. Congress reluctantly passed an act to give each state $15,000 a year for the study of problems in agriculture. The act established a system of experiment stations at the land-grant colleges that had been created by Congress twenty-five years earlier, and that system, funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), became one of the unquestioned success stories of public investment in science. The doublings and triplings of yields that have made American agriculture the most productive in the world owe much to the pioneering work of the stations on pest controls, hybrid plants, fertilization, irrigation, and other mainstays of modern farming.

Unfortunately, the system has begun to show its age. Its critics describe a research structure incapable of keeping pace with modern science—one that has ignored the genetic revolution, systematically excluded the country's best research institutions, and discouraged thousands of the ablest students from pursuing careers in agricultural research. They say that the experiment stations have focused more and more narrowly on solving practical prob-

ILLUSTRATION BY MARVIN MATTELSON

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lems important to relatively few farmers while neglecting the basic research on which all farmers ultimately depend.

The need for basic research in agriculture is becoming increasingly apparent. At a symposium on the genetic engineering of plants held last May at the National Academy of Sciences, in Washington, D.C., a vice president of the World Bank, W. David Hopper, said, "In the twenty-to-thirty-year perspective, we will be unable to support food demand from the potential of traditional research and infrastructure improvement. We must get back to the biological materials." Lowell Lewis, the director of the agricultural experiment station linked to the University of California, likes to say that increasing productivity is "no longer simply a matter of sprinkling on a little more fertilizer." In the 1950s, nitrogen fertilizer boosted the national average yield of corn by two bushels per acre per year; in the 1970s, it accounted for an average gain of less than a half-bushel per acre per year. The yields of many other crops have actually leveled off in the past few years, after rising steadily for decades. And even though most farmers protect their crops with chemicals, pests and diseases still destroy a third of the country's total potential harvest.

The breakthroughs that Hopper, Lewis, and others hope will make future statistics less disappointing will have to come from genetic engineering—or, to be more precise, from plant molecular biology. In principle, genes could be inserted in a plant that would enable it to use nutrients more efficiently, resist diseases, withstand hostile environments, and even make its own nitrogen fertilizer. But although medical uses of genetic engineering are already a reality, agricultural uses are years, if not decades, away. The twenty years of basic research on the molecular biology of bacteria and mammals that laid the groundwork for the medical applications of genetic engineering has no parallel in the plant sciences.

REPRESENTATIVE GEORGE BROWN, A DEMOCRAT from California, is one of three scientists in the House of Representatives; he has been a strong advocate of increasing the funds for basic studies of plants. "Agricultural research is going through a mid-life crisis," he says. "We've emphasized applying existing knowledge and failed to replenish our intellectual capital. Funds for basic plant science, and particularly for plant molecular biology, have been a minuscule fraction of total federal R&D and only a small percentage of USDA funding."

The USDA's grant procedures, almost unchanged since the experiment stations were established, are largely the reason. The stations are given money ($149 million for fiscal year 1983) according to a fixed, state-by-state formula—an arrangement that more nearly reflects nineteenth-century ideas of the proper balance between federal and state government than twentieth-century ideas of the best way to administer science. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Science Foundation (NSF), perhaps because they are more recent creations of Congress, follow different rules. Together, they provide about $4 billion a year for basic research in the biological and physical sciences, and the money is awarded at the recommendations of panels of experts who screen competitively submitted research proposals for their scientific merit. This peer-review process, an almost universally accepted step in the funding of scientific research, is designed to ensure that the work supported will be sound. It also, not incidentally, serves to shield federal funding agencies from congressional pork-barrel politics.

Peer review has yet to make much headway in the USDA. The department established its one program of competitive peer-reviewed grants in 1978, but vehement opposition has kept the budget at $17 million—an eighth of the budget for grants awarded by formula.

The USDA's formula funding has been scrutinized and found wanting more than once, most recently in 1982, at a workshop convened by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy in conjunction with the Rockefeller Foundation. Among the published conclusions were the following: "Research supported by these funds tends to focus on shorter-term, site-specific problems. . . . formula funds, alone, do not always stimulate the level of basic science required to address the most critical and complex research issues." The report of the workshop also criticized the federal agricultural-research system across the board for its distribution of funds "largely on the basis of geopolitics rather than need or expected return." "Geopolitics" is a reference both to the apportionment of money to every state through the formula funding system and to Congress's treatment of USDA field sites and laboratories as political pork. According to the report, many of these facilities are "not justifiable in terms of research need or efficient allocation of scarce resources."

Unlike his colleagues at the smaller land-grant schools, Lowell Lewis, whose experiment station is perhaps the most progressive in the country, doesn't hesitate to join in such criticism. He says, "The same system that by and large has excelled in sustaining effective relationships with the agricultural community has over the last few decades contributed to the declining association of agricultural research with basic science." Even within Lewis's sphere there is evidence of this failing. One of the California station's affiliates is the Department of Plant Pathology at the University of California at Davis. Compared with such departments at other universities, the department at Davis is in the vanguard of basic science. According to William Timberlake, a young molecular biologist there, "Most plant-pathology departments wouldn't even consider having someone who does what I do." But Timberlake also points out that only three of his department's sixteen members are "hard-core" molecular biologists. "If this is

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the most progressive department, you see what the problem is," he says. In Timberlake's judgment, the earmarking of formula funds for specific lines of work and the sums that commodity groups such as the National Peanut Council, the Citrus Research Board, and the Avocado Commission contribute to land-grant colleges for research on their crops "can be very destructive." People "end up doing the same narrow research on five different crops rather than elaborating basic principles," he says.

THE SYSTEM'S NEGLECT OF MOLECULAR BIOLOGY IN favor of short-term site-specific and crop-specific projects has consequences not only for future yields. The pressures that have eliminated an average of 45,000 farms per year since 1970 appear to arise at least in part from the focus of the country's agricultural-research system. A controversy over work done at Davis turns on this point. A mechanical tomato harvester that was developed there in the late 1950s and early 1960s—largely with federal formula funds—has mechanized virtually all of California's processing-tomato crop (tomatoes used in prepared foods like catsup). Researchers at Davis also developed the thick-skinned "square" tomato, which can withstand the rough treatment it gets during mechanical harvesting. California Rural Legal Assistance claims that the $150,000 harvesters have put out of work many of the state's small-scale tomato farmers and field hands. Roger Garrett, the chairman of Davis's Department of Agricultural Engineering, disagrees. He says that the tomato harvester may actually have saved jobs in his state, by encouraging growers to stay put rather than move to Mexico with the termination, in 1964, of the bracero program, which allowed Mexicans into the U.S. to work on farms. Such conflicting interpretations may be heard in court this year, if a suit filed on behalf of farm workers five years ago by California Rural Legal Assistance, which seeks to halt mechanization research at the University of California, goes to trial.

Whether or not the harvester is directly responsible for the loss of jobs on small farms, there is little doubt that its chief beneficiaries have been the largest growers. The same is sure to be true of machines being designed at Davis to harvest grapes, peaches, Valencia oranges, and lettuce. For example, Garrett estimates that the mechanical lettuce harvester he recently invented will have at most 400 buyers. This machine, which uses a gamma-ray probe to test whether a head of lettuce is ripe, can pick three heads per second.

The applied research at Davis is typical of the kind of work in favor nationwide. And many of the innovations of recent decades in farm machinery, fertilizers, and chemicals have pushed farmers either to expand or to quit. While these innovations have increased production, they have also raised the cost of farming. Not only are farmers using more fertilizer and chemicals and buying bigger machines than ever before but also the cost of these energy-intensive technologies has escalated sharply. Fertilizer outlays more than tripled between 1970 and 1980, and fuel outlays rose sixfold. Pesticide outlays increased by 50 percent within just three years, from 1977 to 1980. Commodity prices have remained constant or even fallen, however, so profit margins per acre have shrunk. The only way a farmer can maintain income under these conditions is to expand, and, indeed, the average size of farms during the 1970s did grow, by fifty-six acres. During the same decade, half a million farmers who couldn't withstand these expansionary pressures simply gave up farming.

Whenever the question of farm size arises, it is necessary to dispel some myths. Sentimental, inaccurate pictures of rural life only confuse and ultimately undercut legitimate arguments in favor of preserving small farms. First of all, the smallest farms in the country—the 72 percent that have sales of less than $40,000 per year—are mostly part-time or hobby operations. Doctors and lawyers who raise purebred cattle are closer to the norm than families who must eke out a subsistence on a few acres. Second, there is little basis for the belief that the proprietors of small farms use energy more efficiently, are better stewards of the soil, or even are more satisfied than the proprietors of large farms—or so Luther Tweeten, a professor of agricultural economics at Oklahoma State University, convincingly argued in a recent article in *Science*. And, finally, the competition even in full-time farming is not so much between corporate and family farms as between one family farm and another. Statistics from the 1978 census of agriculture, the latest available, showed that of the 2.4 million farms in the country, only 50,000 were owned by corporations, and that in all but about 2,000 of these cases, the corporation was a family business. Non-family corporations owned less than 2 percent of the country's farmland; moreover, from 1974 to 1978, the number of non-family farming corporations and the total acreage owned by them declined. The typical farm remains a family enterprise of between several hundred and a thousand-some acres.

A legitimate argument for relieving the expansionary pressures on farmers is that farms at the low end of this range are as large as they need to be. In 1981, the USDA found that, on average, once farms reach the size of about 300 acres, they achieve almost all of their potential economies of scale. According to the department's report, "Farmers. . . tend to enlarge their farms in search of higher income, rather than to increase per-unit cost efficiencies. . . . society benefits little in terms of lower food costs from further increases in farm size." Then, too, the expansion of production among a diminishing number of growers entails some worrisome strategic costs. As cropland becomes increasingly concentrated in California and the Midwest, the vulnerability of the rest of the country to rising transportation costs or to another oil embargo increases. Large-scale

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farming exacts further long-range costs to society, by aggravating erosion. The USDA Soil Conservation Service estimates that the soil on one third of the nation's croplands is being eroded faster than it can be replaced by natural processes. Proven anti-erosion measures, such as windbreaks, contour planting, and terracing, are incompatible with the enormous pieces of farm equipment needed to work large tracts.

By neglecting molecular biology, the government has missed an opportunity to ease some of the financial pressures that force farmers to expand. Ray Valentine, a molecular biologist at Davis, says, "The economics are staggering. Once you get a permanent solution and put it into the seed, you write off the investment not just over one year but over the whole lifetime of that variety, everywhere in the world it's used." If such desirable traits as disease resistance can be engineered into a plant, the cost of producing seeds for that variety will be comparable to that for any other variety. By avoiding a substantial amount of their current investment in fertilizers and chemicals, farmers could realize greater profits per acre, and expansion would no longer be the only way for them to increase their income.

TWELVE

A pretty good day, junk fish
and a couple of trout.
Friendly with muskrat
I drift, I cast at rings

I pass the '54 Chevy with fins,
stripped, a place to play
in which I once found
underthings.

What's up
around the bend
is flowers, and among them
reaching for the sky

legs,
some girl's, toes curling,
curling, nails red, her hair
a sight. The boy I forget.

—Rennie McQuilkin

AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGY IS SO FAR BEHIND medical biotechnology that researchers are only now tackling the basic problems of how to insert a foreign gene into a plant and make the gene express itself; the analogous problems in bacteria were solved ten years ago. It is difficult to alter something without knowing how it is built and how it works, and very little is known about the genetic structures of plants. As a result, so far only a narrow range of species is subject to genetic engineering, and then only in the laboratory. The cereal grains, on which much of the world depends for food, are among the species still beyond scientific reach.

Schools other than the seventy-two land-grant institutions might have contributed enormously to agricultural biotechnology if there had been any money to encourage them. Harvard and Stanford, for example, are among the leaders in molecular biology, but because they are not land-grant institutions, they are not eligible for the USDA's formula funds. The $17 million available to non-land-grant as well as land-grant schools in the USDA's competitive program is a drop in the bucket compared with the $3 billion budget of the NIH for biomedically oriented research grants. Lawrence Bogorad, a plant molecular biologist at Harvard, asserts that people who choose to concentrate on the genetics of bacteria and mammals might be just as happy studying the genetics of plants. And Theodore Hullar, the director of the agricultural experiment station at Cornell University, says of the lag in recruitment that "the answer is a simple one: 'Send money.'" According to Hullar, "Many of us have spent our careers in biomedical science not because that's where we wanted to be but because that's where the [research] money was." Mary Clutter, a section head at the National Science Foundation, tells of a "closet plant-cell biologist" on a medical-school faculty who told her, "If I appear to be a medical scientist, I probably have a better chance of obtaining long-term funding for my research." He said that his medical-school affiliation also assures him of having well-trained, bright assistants and access to up-to-date equipment.

Students get the message early on. Until late last year, when Congress approved a small, $5 million fellowship program, the USDA did not offer any fellowships or traineeships in agricultural science. By contrast, the NIH and the NSF make more than $150 million available to students in other scientific disciplines. Inevitably, agriculture has come to be seen as second-rate—definitely not where the action is.

To be sure, a few remedies are being tried. The NSF spent $43 million in 1983 for basic plant-science research, and this year it is sponsoring forty-four post-doctoral fellows. The NIH supports some basic research involving plants, though not as part of any organized program. And last year, the McKnight Foundation, a private organization, awarded to six universities the first of its annual research and training grants, which provide as much as

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$300,000 a year for interdisciplinary studies of basic plant biology.

The disturbing thing about these initiatives, however, is that they have had to be undertaken by organizations whose responsibilities lie outside of agriculture. The logical source of money for basic agricultural research—the USDA—is more or less blocked. Although the status of the department's competitive-grants office was upgraded recently, Congress has kept the budget for such grants level, and it has resisted any tampering with the formula funding mechanism. Would-be reformers, frustrated by this obstacle, have begun to talk of bypassing the USDA altogether. According to Lowell Lewis, "We feel like we've talked and planned and worked and we just get slapped down."

The strongest opposition to reform has come from Representative Jamie L. Whitten, of Mississippi. Whitten, a Democrat, has served in Congress for forty-two years and has been chairman of the powerful House Appropriations Committee, through which all spending bills must pass, for five years. He has become the leading voice in Congress for the smaller land-grant colleges, which have the most to lose from any change in the way research is funded. Whitten says that Congress needs to "ride herd" over research, and his opposition to competitive grants is relentless. This year, Whitten's committee voted to cut by more than half the $21 million requested for competitive grants in the President's budget. (A compromise with the Senate held the program's budget to last year's amount: $17 million.) The problem with basic research, Whitten says, is that "a research man gets so wrapped up in his research" that he loses sight of its purpose. "Basic research is an area we need to give thought to, but we'd better take care of this year's crops," he says.

In Whitten's view, the business of agricultural research should be the local, practical work that the land-grant colleges and experiment stations are set up to do. As an example, he points to the development by southern state experiment stations of a soybean variety that tolerates the climate and soils of the region. He questions whether institutions like Harvard, which he describes as wanting to be "cut in" on federal funding of agricultural research, "are all that good for what we need." Whitten's critics see a less lofty motive at work. "You've got a lot of very smart good old boys who see themselves losing in this situation and have mobilized to stop it," George Brown says. Lewis is even more blunt: "Let's face it, there are a lot of state experiment stations—probably forty of them—that aren't in a position to be competitive" in obtaining funding for basic research on the basis of scientific merit, he says.

The resistance of the small land-grant colleges to change can be intense. These schools routinely dismiss criticisms of the formula funding system as the opinions of "outsiders" who "don't understand" the system. The workshop convened by the White House science office and the Rockefeller Foundation called for more competitive-grant money but was also careful to stress that such funds should not steal from the formula funding base that would always be needed for local agricultural problems. Despite these reassurances, the advocates of formula funding reacted with a personal attack on the White House official who had organized the meeting, Denis Prager. Letters demanding his resignation were sent to the White House; Prager eventually did resign.

Brown, who chairs the House Agriculture Committee's research subcommittee, says that the time to press the case for the USDA's competitive grants will be this spring, when the House begins work on the 1985 omnibus farm bill. Brown says it may be possible to strike a deal with Whitten; he thinks that the pressure for reform is greater than ever, especially given the fact that the larger land-grant schools are breaking ranks and supporting competitive grants. But despite the grounds for optimism, others fear that the USDA will be a dead end for at least as long as Jamie Whitten is in Congress.

THE POLITICAL OBSTACLES ARE NOT LIMITED TO Jamie Whitten. The farmers themselves have never made basic research a high priority in their lobbying. Both the Republican-leaning American Farm Bureau Federation and the smaller, Democratic-leaning National Farmers Union say that they can't give research policy as much attention as commodity price supports and other bread-and-butter issues that determine whether farmers stay in business from one year to the next. To the extent that the organized farm lobbies take a position on research policy, they emphasize short-term goals. "Farmers look to the experiment stations for solutions to problems they face on a day-to-day basis," a staff member of the Farm Bureau says. According to Terry Kinney, administrator of the Agricultural Research Service, the USDA's in-house research arm, "There is always pressure to give attention to immediate problems. They're saying, 'The heck with genetic engineering, I've got a bug chewing up my trees.' "

It will not be easy to sell an increase in research funding to a Congress whose attention is riveted on the record $21 billion that the USDA spent in 1983 on commodity price supports. Lawmakers who have been hearing year after year that America's problem is overproduction may find it hard to believe that we should spend in order to make production still more efficient. Yet the improvements that genetic engineering promises, particularly those that can lower the costs of farming, are the surest guarantees that farmers will be able to stay in business without huge price supports.

Overproduction is unlikely to remain a concern in a world whose population is expected to double in the next forty years. Our failure to lay the groundwork of basic research now will take its toll in the coming decades as the returns of traditional applied research diminish further. □

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SOLIDARITY

A SHORT STORY BY TOVA REICH

A SPECIAL MEETING WAS CONVENED IN THE MAIN sanctuary of the synagogue to resolve the case of Saadia Rachamim. Unfortunately, Mr. Rachamim himself was unable to attend, because, as Rabbi Ozer diplomatically phrased it, he was "held up." Rabbi Ozer paused and elevated his eyelids significantly; the membership laughed on cue. It was permissible to laugh, even when it involved a matter so solemn, and especially because it was the rabbi himself who had pulled the trigger, as it were, by cracking the joke in the first place. The laughter sprang from the congregants, like a cough between movements of a tragic symphony. It was a compact little joke indeed, for those who possessed wit enough to penetrate it. For Rachamim, as everyone knew, was being held up in the county jail pending sentencing for holding up a liquor store with a gun.

Rachamim was sitting in jail, no different from a common criminal—that was true enough. The members of the Orthodox congregation were bitterly aware of this fact. Was it not they who provided him with his kosher meals, packaged in compartmentalized tin-foil trays? And was it not they who had campaigned to allow him to keep his phylacteries for morning prayers despite the objections of the authorities that those religious articles could be used as weapons or as instruments of suicide? Yes, not for a single minute did they forget where Saadia Rachamim was. His presence in that jail, with his crocheted yarmulke affixed by a bobby pin to his dark curls, was an intolerable satisfaction to the Gentiles—that went without saying—but the glee of the Conservative Jews and the Reform also should not be overlooked. As for holding up the store, Rabbi Ozer pounded the podium and declared: "*Allegedly, allegedly*, let us never forget the *allegedly*!" And Rabbi Ozer had gone even further. Only ten days earlier he had reported to the congregation how he had sat opposite Rachamim in the cell, and Rachamim had sworn, sworn on the life of his mother, that he was innocent. Rachamim's black eyelashes were straightened with tears. Gently, Rabbi Ozer reminded him that the pious Jew does not swear. Rachamim then affirmed, he affirmed on his mother's life, that he had not committed the crime. "So you can cross out the *allegedly* even," Rabbi Ozer said. "The man is innocent!" It was a cry of triumph hurled at the ears of the entire community, for one favor the outsiders did not need, as the rabbi put it, was more fuel to feed the flames of anti-Semitism. "Fuel," he glossed, "is the Arabs' department."

That is not to say that there are no Jewish criminals, Rabbi Ozer hastened to add. He himself was an alumnus of the very same yeshiva that the notorious Louie Lepke had attended. Rabbi Ozer was not boasting, but it was undeniable: there wasn't a thing a Gentile could do that a Jew couldn't do just as well, or even better, and that included the heavyweight crimes as well as the slandering of other Jews. But in general, Jews funneled their aggressive energies into law and medicine, not robbery and murder; and, in particular, such felonies were seldom, if ever, heard of in the Orthodox community. Which is not to imply that they were hushed up; they simply did not happen. There were statistics to prove all this, and even the biggest atheist believed in statistics. If, for example, a Jew wearing a yarmulke entered your house to transact some business, you could rest assured that he would not walk out with your silver Sabbath candlesticks. He was, so to speak, flashing a badge that certified his membership in your club, and, on the basis of this connection, you could count on certain things. He might park in front of your driveway and block your car; he might even consider himself as deserving as any orphan if, say, his mission at your house were to collect for the Shimkin Orphanage for Boys, in Israel—but he would never molest your wife, you could depend on that. And even if he would (which, of course, he would not, but just for argument's sake, even if he would, God forbid), he must surely be punished, that's common sense, but exclusively within the confines of the family. He must never be cast out, if only because of the waiting vultures who would open their beaks wide to snatch him up and then, after they had devoured him with extra relish, would soar off to the four corners of the earth to spread the news that they had dined on Jewish flesh, and it was rotten.

There was one more point to add by way of introduction before Rabbi Ozer could proceed to the chief item on the agenda of this extraordinary meeting. And this was a delicate matter, strictly confidential. "As we all know, Mr. Rachamim is an Oriental Jew, forced by such circumstances as we in this free country should never experience to flee Iraq and settle in Israel. That he is now a *yored*, one who has descended from the spiritual pinnacle of the Holy Land

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and come to our shores to drive a taxi, is a separate problem. Who are we to judge, we who luxuriate in the comforts of America and have never made the sacrifice of ascent? Oh, we shall roll. When the Messiah, son of David, comes—quickly and in our time, it is hoped—our souls will roll to Jerusalem, and it will all be uphill. It won't be easy, believe you me. We shall all pay dearly for our self-indulgence. But the point is this: some of us have heard rumors of the friction between the Western Jews in Israel and the Eastern, the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim. There are even those, it is alleged, who call the Oriental Jews lazy, dirty, lacking in ambition and intelligence, immoral and inferior. Let us not noise this about. We all know the fate of the ten spies who returned to the desert and spoke ill of the Promised Land. 'For the tale-bearer, let there be no hope.' We repeat this every day in the Eighteen Benedictions. But just between us, there are even those who go so far as to claim that the situation in Israel may be likened in certain respects to the attitudes of the whites in this country toward the blacks. Now, I am not qualified to comment authoritatively on the state of racial tensions in America, but as for the Israeli scene, I cannot reiterate often enough: a Jew is a Jew! We must stick up for our own! My own parents, they should live and be well, have made the ascent, all honor to them. They have consciously chosen to live in a section inhabited by Tunisian Jews, a section which, unfortunately, in the minds of some of our brothers, would be equated with Bedford-Stuyvesant, here in Brooklyn, or Harlem. And they have made this decision not because the real estate is cheaper in those sections, as some cynics would imply, but because they wish, at the risk of their own persons, to demonstrate that all Jews, no matter where they came from, no matter how strange they may look or how different their customs may be—all Jews are one. Never mind that twice after my parents returned to Israel from visiting their children in America they discovered that they had been robbed. In Israel, when you report the incident to the police, the police are also Jewish. Let Jews deal with their own. But in America, needless to say, it is different. And to complicate matters even further, Mr. Rachamim is not just an ordinary Jew, he is an Orthodox Jew, like us. His rituals may be a little different from ours; the tunes he sings for the liturgy may sound foreign to our ears; he may not put as much stock as we do in the Babylonian Talmud; the Holocaust may signify little or nothing to him personally; but all these variations may be dismissed when we examine the similarities. Blood is blood. And, let me add, blood is thicker than oil! Never for a moment should we forget who are our own, because if we choose to forget, there will be those who rise up to remind us. Hitler does not discriminate. Besides" —and here Rabbi Ozer gave the fetching grin of a boy—"I may still be a young man, but, as far as my experience in judging other Jews goes, I can be compared, like Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, to a man of seventy years. I have sat knee to knee with Saadia Rachamim. I

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have held his hand in mine. I have wiped his tears with my own Kleenex. He has affirmed to me that he is innocent, and, my dear friends, I believe him."

What the rabbi did not mention, perhaps because it was already well known to his congregants—but more likely, they sensed, out of his natural modesty—was the fact that he, personally, had contributed more than his share to patching the antagonism between East and West. His own wife, the Rebbetzin Mazal Ozer, was a Yemenite Jewess, dark and beautiful, like the beloved in the Song of Songs. She concealed her long black crowning glory under an embroidered scarf, beads dangling across her forehead. Each year her kaftan swelled, and when her time came, she gave birth as gracefully as a camel in an oasis. Then, miraculously, she would be restored to her fine-boned slenderness, as if nothing remarkable had taken place. There were already eight little Ozers, swarthy and curly-haired, and the amiable joke was that they represented the affirmative actions of the local yeshiva. Up until the final hours of her pregnancies, Mazal could be found teaching in the synagogue's Hebrew school, one baby slung in a shawl across her breast, two others playing quietly in a corner of the classroom. When Rabbi Ozer strummed his guitar for the teenagers' club, Mazal sang along in her exotic alto, for the rabbi, strict as he was, did not hold by the prohibition against the seductive voice of woman. And Mazal assisted her husband in other ways, as well; she was a true helpmate. For example, since Rabbi Ozer was a *kohain*, a priestly descendant of Aaron, he was forbidden to approach the impurities of a corpse. So Mazal would serve as his ambassador at funerals. She would open her mouth and give out the shrill, tongue-switching, ululating wail of the East. When they had first heard it, the members of the congregation had been appalled, but, as they grew accustomed to it, they began to count on her keen, for it vented the savageness of their own grief and, so it seemed to them, gave them license to tear their own hair and weep out loud in their wretchedness.

SITTING HUNCHED UP IN THE AUDIENCE THIS NIGHT, Mrs. Nettie Brick remembered how Mazal had shrieked and lamented at her Sy's funeral, not even four full weeks ago. It had been Mazal's husband, Rabbi Ozer, who had himself said to her, "Nettie, I want you especially to come to this meeting. It will get you out of yourself. And," the rabbi had added enigmatically, "you might even have a special role to play."

So here she was, the Widow Brick—a starched new title; she must grow used to it. She had warm feelings for Mazal, and for the rabbi, too. They all had. He was their pastor, charged with taking care of his flock, but, because he was so young, not even thirty-five, and because he was so burdened with family, they also felt the responsibility of looking after him. And they appreciated this reciprocal role. How could he manage in these days of inflation on a paltry rabbi's salary? Her own Sy had done the Ozer family's laundry and dry cleaning free of charge. The dentist in the congregation undertook all their teeth, professional courtesy, and this would be no small matter one day when the time for braces arrived—as inevitably as tax time, Nettie Brick mused, and as death. The pediatrician likewise. The Croesus of the congregation, Mr. Garfinckel, gave the rabbi odd jobs and paid him handsomely—such jobs as tutoring his retarded son for *bar mitzvah* and building his *sukkah*. Rabbi Ozer did not stand on his dignity, and, as a matter of fact, he particularly enjoyed physical labor. He was a black belt in karate. Al Heller, who ran the health-and-recreation club, had been providing him with free lessons for years.

Oh, they were a lovely and delightful couple, the rabbi and Mazal. Mrs. Brick thought so, and so did they all: Mazal, as thin and ornate as filigree, and the rabbi, handsome and bearded, broad of shoulder, with a soft, comfortable belly under his white shirt. Their rabbi was a strong man, in body and in spirit. He had a wide backside, "from sitting and learning all day," he would joke. And it was said that in the telephone-directory-tearing contests that the yeshiva boys used to hold to test the strength of their arms, their own Rabbi Ozer, with one powerful rip, would split in two the Brooklyn Yellow Pages. "The Staten Island book was for the *pishers*," Rabbi Ozer used to say. "When we got mad at the sages because we couldn't understand one of their arguments, we took it out on Ma Bell. It was better than laying into the *Gemara*, no?" Yes, indeed. He was no scholar, their Rabbi Ozer, but he was a generous man, and kind, and more than that, he was human. Nettie Brick, and each participant in the room, for that matter, had not the slightest difficulty summoning up the picture of their rabbi in a cell, his pale-blue eyes reddening as he gazed with utter empathy on the prisoner.

Nettie could feel him looking at her now; it was like a weight. Her mind had slipped away to the image of her son, Mike, curled up in bed with his fists between his knees, sobbing each night of the seven days of mourning. At this memory her thoughts were arrested. Then, when the time was over, Mike had thrown his suitcase into his Toyota, embraced her violently, assured her that he had "dealt with it," and driven off toward the upstate graduate school where he was taking a degree in clinical psychology. Saadia Rachamim was just about Mike's age, Nettie figured, twenty-five, give or take. She put her hand to her forehead, as if to adjust a strand of hair, but really to shoo away the rabbi's troublesome gaze. Still, he was fixed upon her. What could he want? His tone now was a mixture of authority and pragmatism. The authority came from the success he was reporting: he had succeeded in persuading the judge to release the prisoner to the recognizance of the synagogue. "I hope you know what you're doing, Rabbi," were the judge's words as the rabbi conveyed them to the congregation. "So I said to him, 'Judge LeVine,' I said, 'when the joker came before the sage Hillel and demanded

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to be taught the entire Torah while standing on one foot, Hillel didn't cast him out as the other rabbis had done. Instead, Hillel instructed him as follows: What you despise, don't do to your friends—that's the whole Torah. In other words, Judge,' I said, 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you. You get the gist.'

"'Judge LeVine,' I went on, 'you may be only a High Holidays Jew. You may not be a Jew who gives an accounting to the Almighty three times a day, like Saadia Rachamim. Nevertheless, Judge, because you're a Jew—and I don't care what persuasion, Conservative, Reform, atheistic, converted, or what—because you're one of us, if the tables were turned, Judge, I'd do the same for you.'"

Rabbi Ozer was beaming. He had scored a victory. He was as unambiguously triumphant as a child. Not one person in that sanctuary cared to spoil his hour for him. But the consequences were obvious. They now had Saadia Rachamim on their hands. How to dispose of him? This was the practical end of the matter. It had not been so long ago that Nettie had read in the papers about a criminal who wrote on the side. And this criminal had been taken up by a bunch of literary types, who had welcomed him into their group as one of their own, and then he—this criminal writer, in other words—pulled a fast one on his mentors: he killed a man. Not one of the elect, not another famous writer, but still, a human being, in the image of God. These were facts, what Mike used to call current events. The story came to mind in its entirety, all its sequences compressed. But art is art, and religion is in another sphere totally, Nettie chided herself. It is not irreconcilable for a writer to be a killer, but a man who willingly wears a yarmulke as a symbol to the world and as a personal restraint against unseemly conduct . . . Well, it goes without saying. Nettie could not even pinpoint the moment when she rose from her chair. It must have been the force of the rabbi's stare that buoyed her—his eagerness, his desire. And looking back, all she could remember was herself standing there, as if she were simultaneously observer and participant: she, the Widow Brick, nodding. Yes, he could sleep in Mike's room, she had no objections. She nodded. Yes, he could help her out at the cleaners, at least until she made the decision whether to keep the business or to sell out. She nodded. Yes, of course, it was mutually advantageous. She needed help, he needed help. She was all alone and so was he. His room and board could be deducted from the salary. Yes, he could do odd jobs around the house. It would be beneficial all around.

The Widow Brick had volunteered. "Look, everyone! Nettie is smiling for the first time in almost a month," the rabbi noted. "She has something to look forward to, my friends, another human being to devote herself to. When I was a boy, if I might digress for a moment, I would sometimes complain about my lot. My father, in his wisdom, would suggest that I go visit a hospital to see those less fortunate than I. 'Then you'll know how lucky you are,' my father would say. My friends, there is nothing as curative and as revitalizing as accepting the responsibility for taking care of someone even worse off than yourself. Believe me, Nettie, this is your ticket to *Gan Aiden*, to Paradise, where, if I may be so bold, you will, through this deed, have earned far more than the feminine privilege of serving as the footstool of your dear husband, Seymour the son of Kalman Brick, may his memory be blessed."

Well, he would probably take off his shoes and keep from bearing down too heavily on her, her Sy, if she were granted the reward of becoming his footstool in the next life, for even in this world he had never been much of a burden. His demands had been so few, in their intimate life as well as in their public life. He had always seemed so grateful for everything, a little surprised, as if he never thought he deserved whatever paltry kindness she conferred. A regular Bontshe Shveig. In Paradise he would probably pass up a portion of the Leviathan for a warm roll. He had even been considerate in his dying, getting it over with quickly, without a prolonged illness. In the early years of their marriage she had sometimes craved a little more adventure and passion, but, as time passed, she had come to appreciate the solidity and reliability of the man. Up at dawn, preparing his own breakfast of stale bread dipped in sweet coffee, and then straight to the store, where he stood on his feet all day till dark. Truly, the man had earned a footstool. Six days a week he worked, and when the blue laws were repealed, he opened on Sundays, too. It was only in his last years that, thanks to the influence of Rabbi Ozer, he had become observant and rested on Saturday. The rabbi was always doing things like that, Nettie reflected. "Proselytizing among Gentiles is forbidden," the rabbi would say. "When a *goy* wishes to convert, it is our duty to make it hard for him, to test the depths of his sincerity. But to persuade a Jew to become more devout is a *mitzvah*, a righteous deed, and our passport to the world to come."

Nettie thought of Murray the fruit man, who used to sell his produce from a truck. It was Rabbi Ozer who had promised to solicit customers for him if he rested on the Sabbath. Nettie, too, had patronized him for a time. But Murray's fruits and vegetables were so rotten that everyone soon stopped buying from him—and, anyway, it was rumored that he drove to another part of the borough on the Sabbath and peddled there. With all the restrictions, Rabbi Ozer himself had no way of checking. Only poor Mazal Ozer was forced to continue to buy from Murray, and once, when she was in the store, she confided to Nettie that she wished her Yerucham would accept a pulpit somewhere else, just to get rid of Murray with his bruised peaches and his wormy green peppers. Nettie had been taken aback, it is true, to hear so faithful a wife as Mazal openly criticize her husband—a husband who belonged not only to Mazal but to the entire community—but then she remembered how important salads were in the Yemenite diet, or at least she thought she had read something of the sort somewhere.

But her Sy had become genuinely religious, trudging

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each morning, rain or shine, to the early *minyan,* carrying his prayer shawl and phylacteries in a brown paper bag instead of the embroidered velvet sack, because he wished to avoid making a spectacle of his piety. And Nettie, too, had come in her own way to believe. "How do I know God is there?" she said, taking up Mike's challenge. "I know because when I need Him I turn to Him, so He must have been there all the time, even when I wasn't noticing." Oh, how she missed him—Sy, that is. She could never have predicted how much. It hadn't hit her until after the first week, when the dreamlike bustle of the *shiva* had come to an end. She opened his closet and his drawers to pack away his clothing to send to Israel. He never bought himself a thing; every item was so worn, his imprint was on each thread. That was when she truly wept, howling in the empty house until her throat ached, and for the rest of the afternoon her chest heaved and little shredded sobs sprang from her, exactly as they used to when she had cried as a little girl.

In the night table she found the gun he had bought a few years back, when there had been an epidemic of burglaries in the neighborhood. She wondered if she could legally keep it; the license had probably been taken out in Sy's name. But how could she ship a pistol overseas? Besides, in Israel there was already an Uzi in every house. She replaced it in the empty drawer, from which she had removed his handkerchiefs with the maroon borders, strands of mottled shoelaces, an old roll of Tums. Her Sy never wasted a thing. And now there was nothing more she could do for him. He no longer required his socks to be matched or a hot supper to be placed before him on the table. She was useless to him on this earth and in eternity as well, except maybe as a footstool. Still, at least there was the store to occupy her. And even that: it had taken years to persuade Sy to let her help out. "What do you need it for?" he had protested. "A pretty little lady like you, stuck in there all day long, breathing in the chemicals, handling people's soiled *shmatehs.*" But she had insisted: Mike was in school, she had nothing to do but watch the soap operas. "So I'll watch the soaps in the store," she had said, "and meanwhile I'll keep you from fooling around with the young girls." She began by perching on the stool like the queen for a day. Pretty soon she was doing the books, and, with time, she became totally involved. And even Sy had to admit that it had been a good idea after all. So there was still the store—thank God for that. And now, of course, there was this poor young man, this Saadia Rachamim, to keep her in this world.

THE RABBI'S INSTINCTS HAD BEEN ONE HUNDRED percent on the mark, Nettie now recognized. The entrance of Saadia Rachamim into her life did indeed serve to take her mind off herself. There was a reason now to get up in the morning, to dress herself, to brush her hair and put on a little lipstick. As soon as she heard him finishing his morning prayers she would set his breakfast on the table—some salad, bread, and coffee, in the Israeli style. But then he expressed his preference for sugared dry cereal and he protested that he could serve himself. In so many ways he tried to become an authentic American. He wore jeans, T-shirts with slogans, and Nikes. "You must always to correct my English, Mrs. Nettie," he told her. "I wish to melt in the pot." He was enchanting—lithe and sinewy, as affectionate as a pet. At least once a day he would hug her and pronounce her beautiful. "How old are you, Mrs. Nettie? Fifty-eight? Honest? My mother, she is forty-four, and you can be a baby sister to her." "Aw, go on!" "You want I should go on?" Saadia inquired earnestly. Nettie giggled. "It's just an expression, Saadia honey, an idiom." "You say that I am an idiom?" He tapped his head with a brown finger. "I have brains up here. I am talking what is true." "Oh, Saadia, Saadia." Nettie patted his hand.

So he had a mother of his own, but he seemed never to have had a childhood. In Mike's room he amused himself for hours with the old toys—the electric trains, the Erector Sets, the Legos, the games. After work he dribbled the basketball in the driveway and perfected his jump shot. He was small but fast, and he could leap. He pedaled Mike's bicycle through the neighborhood, a suit or a woolen dress in a plastic bag swinging on a hanger from the handlebar, delivering to customers. She was moved by his struggle. He vacuumed for her, lugged in the groceries, and arranged them on the shelves. He quickly learned where everything belonged. On Sabbath mornings he

LISTEN

Listen, my little mongoose, I know
the difference between this and love,
for I've had love, and had it taken away.

This feeling-sorry-for-ourselves-but-outward
is one of desire's shiftier shapes:
see how the deep of night is crept upon our love-

making, and how we believe what we disbelieve,
and find in our hopeful arms what we'd thought
to have thrown away, my stolen good,

the map by which we'll part, and love others.

—*William Matthews*

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brought her breakfast in bed. "You're spoiling me," Nettie said. "*Spoil*? Is she Yiddish word—*spoil*?" He was her fashion consultant. "You must to wear the blue beads with that dress," he said. "Oh, I don't even know where they are." In a flash he produced them. He fit in so readily; he learned so fast. He cheered her up, no question about it.

They kidded around a lot, but there were also serious discussions. He spoke of his past. He was the second of eleven children. His mother had married when she was fourteen. His father worked as a falafel vendor, not far from the Tel Aviv Central Bus Station. His three grown sisters were a hotel maid, a waitress, and a prostitute. His older brother was making a career in the army. He himself had been drafted at the age of eighteen, just in time for the Yom Kippur War. But army life was not for him: it was a giant welfare system, it was too regulated, he had not been put on this earth to be a kept man. Besides, he was a pacifist. He wanted to carve out his own way, to be independent. Toward that end he had emigrated to the Land of the Free. He hated all Arabs, he told Nettie. He would shoot one without a quiver, as absentmindedly as he would swat a fly off his father's chick-peas. When Nettie protested, pointing out that Arabs were not Germans, after all, that they had a legitimate gripe, that they were, when you faced it, fellow Semites, Saadia grew hot. She didn't know them as he did, he said; they were a lower form of life. They had no case at all. The Israelis never chased the Arabs out of their homes. But the Arabs persecuted the Jews in Iraq, in Syria, in Yemen, in Algeria, and so on. They murdered them, exiled them, expropriated their wealth. His own family had been rug merchants in Baghdad. How many falafels would his father have to hustle to put a down payment on a single Tabriz? What about our claims? But you're an Arab yourself, Nettie argued, regretting her words instantly. Saadia flipped open his wallet. He showed her his green card. "Ask me who was George Vashington?" he demanded. He stood at attention and sang "The Star Spangled Banner." He had memorized every word, an accomplishment that even she, Nettie, had to concede was beyond her powers.

He was absolutely adorable, Saadia Rachamim. She wanted him to go to night school, get a high-school-equivalency diploma, and, after that—who knows?—maybe even college. "You have it in you, Saadia. I can tell." She encouraged him to step out in the evenings, seek out people his own age, meet some girls. "If only for the sake of your health, darling. You're a young man, don't forget, with hormones. Why waste so much time with an old lady like me?" "You are the only girl that I love, Mrs. Nettie." "Go on, Saadia, you'll turn my head. That's another idiot. You know, dear, I happen to know that you're one terrific dancer. I've seen you dancing to beat the band when you play Mike's old records. Go to a disco or something. You need an outlet. Where in the Torah is it written that you're not allowed to have a little fun once in a while? All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. That's different from an idiom. That's a proverb, like from the *Ethics of the Fathers*." And she handed him the keys to the station wagon, with "Brick's Laundry and Dry Cleaning/One-Day Service/Pickups and Deliveries" printed across both front doors.

IN THE STORE, SAADIA'S BEHAVIOR WAS IRREPROACHable. He was polite and friendly to customers, fast and unruffled, and in no time at all he knew the business cold. Maybe she should sell him the whole kit and kaboodle, on easy terms—set him up. Or better still, if she held on to the store, which now seemed more feasible, thanks to Saadia, she could bequeath it to him in her will. Mike had no interest in it. She observed Saadia closely from her chair in the corner, and she was impressed. Soon she had complete confidence in him. Occasionally she would step out for the afternoon, to do some shopping or to go to the beauty parlor or just to take a nap. She began to doubt that she could ever have managed without him. He even instituted a few improvements of his own. For instance, he placed a pile of tickets on the counter so that customers who were in a rush could fill them out for themselves. It was amazing how little touches like that could make such a big difference. And pretty soon, whenever there was a problem—a misplaced garment, for example, or a stubborn stain—she would say to the customer, "Talk to Sandy. He'll help you." Sandy was Saadia's new, American name; he chose it because it rang so casual and athletic to his ears. "Sandy" was emblazoned across his heart and his mind, on his T-shirt and on the yarmulke that Nettie herself had stitched with love.

Rabbi Ozer, as he had promised, did not interfere. At first he telephoned once a week or so, just to "touch base." But after a while even that minimal intervention ceased. Of course, the rabbi occasionally saw him during the week, whenever Saadia managed to snatch some time off from the store to attend daily services, and, naturally, Saadia came regularly to synagogue on the Sabbath. As the rabbi shook his hand in farewell one Saturday at noon, he inquired if Saadia had recently "lost a loved one," for he had noticed that the young man had risen to chant the *Kaddish* among the other mourners. "It is for Mr. Brick I am saying," Saadia replied. "Mrs. Nettie, she is like a mama to me, so he is my papa." That was very thoughtful of him, Rabbi Ozer explained as tactfully as he could, but, if the rabbi wasn't mistaken, Saadia had a living father of his own, and besides, the rabbi was certain that Mike, wherever he was, was diligently attending to the *Kaddish* for Mr. Brick. There was such a thing as being too devout, ultra ultra, the rabbi cautioned, and in some ways that was as dangerous as being too lax. Extremes in either direction were to be avoided. For example, Saadia would fall down on his knees, right to the floor, in the *Aleinu*, when a slight flexing of the knees and a brief bow of the head were quite sufficient. Maybe that's how they did it in Saadia's neck of

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the East, but here, in the West, it smacked of prostration, a posture that rightfully belonged in a church, certainly not in a synagogue, except on the High Holidays. Saadia also persisted in wearing a prayer shawl, which, as everyone knows, is a garment traditionally donned by a man only after he has married. "I am taking care of Mrs. Nettie," he said, "so she is like a wife to me."

Rabbi Ozer considered these incidents, as well as others, to be minor matters, merely aberrations, and he concluded that they stemmed from one of three sources: (1) The variations in custom between West and East. But, since the rabbi was himself married to a Yemenite, he was fairly familiar with the rituals, so he rejected this possibility. (2) An attempt on Saadia's part to impress by doing more than was required. Rabbi Ozer called to mind the commentary about Esau, who, in seeking to dazzle his father, Isaac, with his piety in order to obtain the paternal blessing, asked officiously if it was necessary to give a tithe on salt. This was an intolerable possibility, and the rabbi dismissed it. (3) Quite simply, Saadia's ignorance. Let's face it, he was no rabbi. He was religious in a primitive, even superstitious, way. He was unlearned and unsophisticated, and, under the circumstances, it was not remarkable that he tended to be overzealous, a little fanatic. The errors he committed were a natural consequence, and utterly predictable. This was the only reasonable explanation.

The Rebbetzin Mazal Ozer also checked up on Saadia, when she brought the family's laundry into the store. She reported back to her husband that the boy seemed to be working out; the rabbi could say he told her so if he cared to. "A little fresh, maybe, but okay." "What do you mean, fresh?" "You know, *chutzpah*, plain, old-fashioned, Israeli nerve—rudeness, bad manners. Just because he wears a *kippah* on top of the head, you think he has only holy thoughts inside? I've already told you, Yerucham. At home I would never have said even two words to him. He is not my element. Here in America, everyone thinks we are cousins. Nothing to do."

It was definitely an event when Mazal strode into the store. Nettie would watch from her corner. The two of them would immediately fall to jabbering in a Hebrew that sounded coarse and harsh to Nettie's ears, almost like Arabic. The white camel teeth and the ripe red tongues would flicker in the dark faces. Occasionally, Nettie would ask him afterward what they had discussed so animatedly. Once they had joked about Saadia's new name, he recounted. Mazal had commented that it sounded like the name of an Irish cop. He looked like a Sandy about as much as she looked like Miss Sweden. Better he should pick a Puerto Rican name—Sancho, or something. Another time, Saadia reported, he had told Mazal that she should get her rabbi some wash-and-wear shirts. Just because Brick's was doing their laundry free of charge didn't mean she should take advantage by buying only one-hundred-percent-pure cotton. Even a rabbi has to sweat, Saadia knew, but enough is enough. Nettie, for her part, had been doubly aghast, first, as she told Saadia, because he had been insolent and most likely had offended the rabbi's wife, and second, though she did not mention this, because she, Nettie, at one time or another, had also harbored the very same thought. So Saadia was truly her ally. But, oh, the pride of the benefactor: Nettie was the Ozers' benefactor, and even more so, Saadia's. Whether she admitted to it or not, how deeply did she hold them in her debt? How heavily did she hold the rabbi in account, for the faith he had sold her if not for the shirts? But Saadia reassured her. "Not to worry, Mrs. Nettie. It is the peculiar joking of the Middle East. Mazal and me, we understand one the other."

It was so: they seemed to form a distinct subgroup, Mazal and Saadia. There was always something for Nettie to mull over after Mazal left the store. Once there had actually been an incident, an unpleasant one at that, although Mazal and Saadia had certainly not been at fault. Nettie was a witness. It had happened around five-thirty, a busy time, usually, for people liked to stop in after work on their way home. Saadia was serving a woman who had a large load to pick up. Behind her was Mazal, a presence that at this hour annoyed Nettie, for Mazal, who was free most of the day and who, let's not forget, was accepting charity, could at least have had the courtesy to show up during the slow periods. And behind Mazal was a man in his fifties—Nettie did not know his name—a fairly new, irregular customer. He was dressed in a business suit, an executive of some sort, probably, and he appeared to have come to them straight from Happy Hour. He was tapping his foot and growing visibly more and more impatient. Nettie knew she should get up and help out, but something kept her in her seat. Pretty soon he was ranting. He was accusing Saadia and all blacks of getting back at him personally. He claimed that blacks were everywhere, behind the counters in post offices, banks, stores, everywhere, and everywhere they got their revenge by making him wait. First they pretended not to notice him. Then, when they had no choice but to recognize him, they moved like a film in slow motion. It was driving him crazy. Was he responsible for what they had suffered? Had he ever in his life kept a slave? Had his grandfather or his great-grandfather? No such luck. His family had paid its dues too, but did he have a chip on his shoulder? Did he bear a grudge against the whole world? "What did I ever do to you?" he cried pathetically. "Excuse me, sir," Saadia said, "but I am not black." "Let him go ahead of me, Saadia *habibi*," Mazal said with tenderness despite herself. "Us browns, we must stick together."

THAT SABBATH MORNING, STILL TRAPPED BY SLEEP, Nettie heard Saadia fumbling with her bedroom doorknob, by now a familiar weekly sound. She heard him push the door open with his hip in order to keep steady the tray he was balancing in his hands. She heard

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the clatter of coffee cup, saucer, and spoon as he set his load down on the nightstand between the two beds. Thinking back, she even seemed to remember hearing the inevitable little splash of liquid as it spilled over and formed a moat in the saucer, soaking the two lumps of sugar that Saadia by now knew she liked with her coffee. Her gray hair in a net, her face buried in the pillow, she murmured, "Oh, Saadia, dear, I'm such a mess. I haven't even brushed my teeth." She heard some more fumbling, a drawer opening and shutting, and that must have been when he took out the gun. When she looked up, it was pointed at her. "What are you doing, Saadia?" He said: "I am coming to pay you back what I owe you." He pressed the muzzle against her temple. She could feel it making a circular imprint. It reminded her of the sensation she used to feel on her back as a child when her mother would apply small round glasses to her skin, glasses from which the air had been drawn out with a match so as to form a suction that would extract the poisons of her illness—*beinkes*, it was called. How was it possible to suffer such an onslaught of thoughts, even memories, in moments of fear and peril? The entire episode with Saadia could not have lasted much longer than five minutes, yet each second, each millisecond, was distinct. "Why are you doing this, boy? What could you want that I haven't already given you?" The words trooped out in a row from Nettie's mouth, but it was not she who was speaking. The real Nettie had retreated.

He threw her quilt back and lifted her nightgown, almost therapeutically. It was her best nightgown, long-sleeved and of an opaque white silk, and she always wore it on Friday nights because she wanted to look respectable when he arrived with the coffee in the morning. She stared at the ceiling, but on the screen of her eyes what he was seeing was projected: the varicose veins on her legs, the dead-white, sagging flesh of her belly and thighs. She heard the scratch of a zipper and the soft rustle of falling material—his pants, his Jockey shorts that she laundered herself. He must have removed them with his left hand, because the right still pressed the gun to her head. He arranged himself on top of her. The gun was now digging into her left breast. A fly was circling the fixture on the ceiling. Where had it come from? Green and luminous, it would not be still. Her mouth was open but not a sound came out. Had that fly escaped from within her out through the hole of her mouth? Was that vexing noise the cartoon bubble of her scream? That vulgar creature frantically hurling itself about, was that her soul, released? She had never possessed a soul. A soul signified the existence of God. Where was He? There was never a God.

"And that's the worst part of it," Mazal said to her husband when he returned from synagogue that afternoon. "She has lost her faith." Nettie at the door, a kerchief wrapped around her head and pushed forward like a cowl, as if her face were the blindness at the end of the alley, sunglasses hiding her eyes and tears leaking down as if from two black pits: this apparition had terrified the smaller children, who had not accompanied their father to synagogue. They took refuge behind their mother, clutching wherever their hands could reach. "I didn't know what I should do, Yerucham," Mazal said. "Was I wrong not to run to *shul* and call you home? I didn't want to alarm everyone. She's upstairs in our bedroom. Maybe she's sleeping; anyway, I hope so. I gave her fifteen milligrams of Valium. Is that too much? I wanted to call the doctor even though it's *Shabbat*, but she wouldn't let me. I told you, Yerucham, I told you, but you didn't listen."

THERE WAS NO FAMILY DINNER IN THE OZER HOUSE that afternoon. The rabbi took the knife that was laid out on the table beside the covered loaves of challah, the silver-handled knife with *Shabbat Kodesh*, "Holy Sabbath," engraved on it. He slipped it into the pocket of his black overcoat with the velvet collar. It stuck out a little. "What are you doing, Yerucham? Don't be crazy!" "I'll take care of this," he said. "But you're not allowed to carry on *Shabbat*," Mazal said in desperation. "*Pikuakh nefesh dokheh Shabbat*," the rabbi quoted in Hebrew: Mortal danger overrides the Sabbath. "At least take some money along." He allowed her to drop a few coins into his pocket, as if it were being done without his knowledge.

Yerucham Ozer had only one thought in mind: to find Saadia Rachamim. His reason for snatching up that knife, violating the Sabbath in the process, was not clear even to himself. Did he intend to use it to subdue, perhaps even to kill, Rachamim? But if he did so, the knife would become *fleishig*, designated only for meat, and it would no longer be permissible to slice the challah with it for dairy. What a foolish and irreverent thought to have at such a time! The mind was a rascal, uncontrollable, an incorrigible criminal. And what exactly had he meant by *pikuakh nefesh*, mortal danger? To Nettie? Her body had been violated, but it had not been killed. Her soul had been murdered. The word *nefesh* was often used interchangeably with *neshama*, soul. Why had the sages not said *pikuakh lev*, danger to the heart? If the heart stops, the body dies. There must be a reason why they preferred the word *nefesh*. The sages chose their language scrupulously. Thus, the condition of *pikuakh nefesh* must be applicable to Nettie's situation. Here was material for a sermon.

Oh, exegesis, it was a snare; it rendered you incapable of action. More likely, he had had in mind the mortal danger to himself, for despite the rabbi's superior strength and his training in karate, Rachamim no doubt was still carrying the gun. Or was he? Was it conceivable that Rachamim was so convinced that they would hush up the entire affair that he had cast away the gun? Well, it was certainly possible that Rachamim reasoned that the rabbi would take no steps to apprehend him because of the loss of face such exposure would involve. After all, the congregation had invested its trust and its good name in him. Rachamim had

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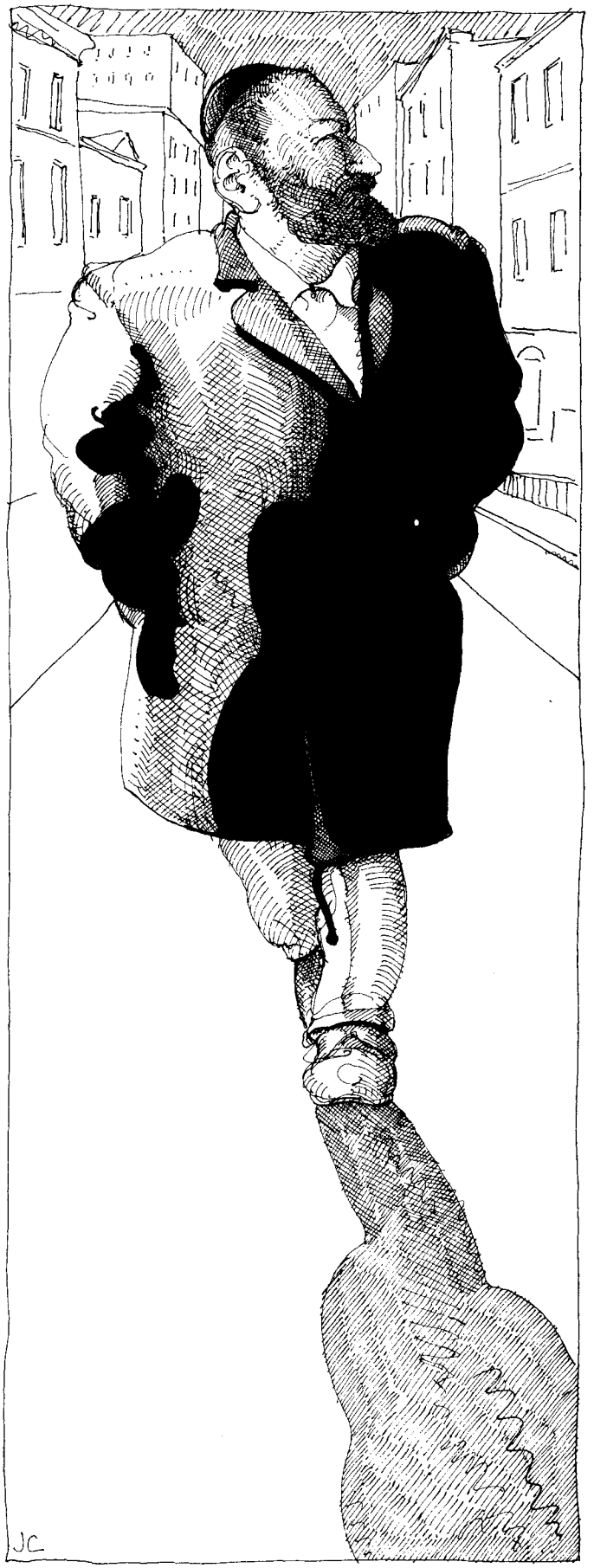
served them as a cause. All this was a matter of public record. Most likely, he figured they would allow him to skip town, and whatever damage he had done they would struggle to repair within the cloister of the family. But really, there was very little chance that Rachamim had gotten rid of the gun, if for no other reason than that he already possessed it. What scum he was, Rabbi Ozer thought, a wild beast. The rabbi was overcome with a huge urge to spit, and, even more powerfully, he wanted to seize Rachamim by his noose-ripe neck and shake him and squeeze him until the villainous life sprang out of him with a nasty pop and a foul odor. And, along with his base life, the rabbi would squeeze out of Rachamim a confession: I have betrayed Nettie, I have betrayed you, I have betrayed Mazal, I have betrayed the congregation, I have betrayed the Sephardim, I have betrayed the entire Jewish people. And only when the rabbi was certain that Rachamim despised himself utterly, only when he was sure that Rachamim was hopelessly sorry and truly wretched, only then would the rabbi finish him off. What a sweet pleasure it would be, the rabbi thought, a revenge the likes of which I've never known. Am I capable of such a deed? In my line of business, I have condemned many a soul, but never a Jewish soul, and certainly not in one stroke along with the body. When I spoke of *pikuakh nefesh*, was I worrying about that bastard after all?

THE SENSATION OF WALKING THE STREETS WITH A secular purpose on the Sabbath overwhelmed him. Everything seemed different: the houses, the trees, the cars, the people scurrying in and out of the shops. It resembled any weekday, yet the pervasive sense that it was the Sabbath altered the scene. He was troubled by the awareness that he was doing something wrong, yet there was also a slight but irrepressible delight in the illicitness of his action. It reminded him of the agitation he used to feel as a student, taking off for a movie or playing basketball when he should have been working. Even as he had enjoyed himself, in the back of his mind he was nagged by the anxiety that he ought to be elsewhere, that something undone awaited doing, that he would pay with interest.

The Brick car was in the driveway, so Saadia had not taken it. Would he drive on the Sabbath? What a question. What would desecrating the Sabbath mean to a rapist? The garage was empty, a cinderblock tomb. The door to the house was ajar, as in times of mourning. Yerucham Ozer entered. The silence inside was of a ponderous quality; it seemed to him to be the kind of haunted silence that follows a great calamity and commotion. He walked through the rooms, his back prickling exactly as it had when, as a child, he had run through a dark hallway of his parents' house with the sure knowledge that a monster was pursuing him. Why was it that in danger one's childhood was revived? Was the threatened person instinctively



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shuffling through memories, searching for the safety of mother? Old people, too, on the brink of death, slid backward to the etched memories of their youth. Yerucham Ozer had sat beside many a deathbed, and he knew. The cellar, the attic, the closets—he opened each door expecting Rachamim to pounce out like a panther. What would he do if that happened? The rabbi himself did not know. He would wait and see, as if he would meet himself in the encounter. Mike's room was empty. Rachamim's clothing was still in the dresser. In the closet his Sabbath suit was hanging. Under the bed was a photograph of a couple seated against a painted backdrop of clouds and sky. The faces of the man and woman were so brown and shriveled they seemed to have been carved out of walnut shells. Saadia's parents, alas.

The cleaning shop was locked, metal bars hauled across the plate-glass windows in front. Rabbi Ozer peered through as best he could, but he could distinguish no signs of life. The small windows in the rear were caked with dirt and lint. But there was no light burning within. The burglar alarm would have gone off had Rachamim entered, as it did each morning when he opened the store. The rabbi went to the luncheonette next door and beckoned to the proprietor to step out. He did not wish to enter, because of the issue of *marit ayin*, appearances, for how would it look if someone noticed the rabbi walking into a place of business on the Sabbath? It was bad enough that he was compelled to violate the holy day to this extent, but it was still within his power to avoid unnecessary transgressions. From behind the counter, the owner of the luncheonette gestured to invite the rabbi in, but the rabbi in turn kept motioning him out. At last the shopkeeper came to the door. No, the alarm had not gone off today. No, he had not seen Sandy at all today. Sure, he knew Sandy. He came into the store every day at lunchtime and always ordered the same thing: a BLT on toast with a milkshake. "With a milkshake, yet!" the rabbi cried. "I hope to God he took off his yarmulke when he ate."

Granted, it wasn't solely because Rachamim was an Orthodox Jew that they had labored so tirelessly in his behalf. Of course, it cannot be denied that the fact that he professed to be observant increased the pressure to come to his defense quickly and decisively; but, as the rabbi told the judge, there was no doubt that they would have devoted themselves as faithfully to any Jew who appealed to them in a similar plight, and especially because Rachamim was innocent. And now, in the light of the day's events, that innocence, affirmed on his mother's life, could be discarded. "Am I such a miserable judge of human beings?" the rabbi wondered. He walked the streets, and with each step he accused and cursed himself. What does his mother's life signify to a man who could rape a woman he called his own "mama"? The rabbi had heard with his own ears. Yet, on another occasion, he had called her his wife. Was Rachamim, quite simply, demented? Perhaps I should pity him and forget the whole thing. The man is obviously sick, psychotic; what good would retribution do? "Akavyah the son of Mahalalel said: Regard three things and you will not come to sin. Know where you came from and where you are going and before whom in the future you will be obliged to give an account and reckoning. Where did you come from? From a putrefying drop. Where are you going? To a place of dust, worms, and maggots. And before whom in the future will you be obliged to give an account and reckoning? Before the King of Kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He." We are all pitiful creatures, the rabbi reflected, Saadia Rachamim, Yerucham Ozer, all of us. Out one hole, into another—those are the two dates on either side of the blank. Let me punish Saadia Rachamim with my pity and leave him to the supreme court in the seventh heaven. Perhaps the Almighty will judge him sternly and with rigor, or perhaps He will listen to the psychiatric testimony and be merciful. He'll know what to do. I'll leave it to Him. On the other hand, even if Rachamim's alleged madness renders him not responsible for his actions, clearly he is dangerous and must be apprehended. Rachamim is a menace; in citing *pikuakh nefesh*, the rabbi was willy-nilly referring to the community at large. The rabbi had set the madman loose. For the harm that had been done to Nettie he was partially at fault. He was an accomplice in the rape. At the very least, he had a duty to make amends.

IT WAS DUSK. HERE AND THERE THE HEADLIGHTS OF cars were switched on. The streetlights were glowing. Rabbi Ozer walked. He had no idea where to search. He did not know Rachamim's haunts. And what made him think that Rachamim was still around? If Rachamim had any sense at all, he would have grabbed some money and fled. Yerucham Ozer was cold and hungry. He had not eaten all day, except for the Sabbath breakfast—a piece of cake and lukewarm coffee. Was that only this morning? It seemed to him to have been nourishment from another life. A light rain began to fall, glittering from the electric lights that were by now burning everywhere. The sidewalks sparkled. The rabbi looked up at the sky. He counted three stars. The Sabbath was over. "He who separates between the holy and the profane, forgive our sins; our children and our money He should increase like the sand and like the stars at night." The rabbi whispered this prayer and bid the Sabbath Queen farewell; he had not treated her royally this time. He plunged his hand into his pocket, his fingers sliding along the edge of the knife's blade and coming to rest among the coins that Mazal had dropped inside.

He was now in a section where he had never walked before. He had passed through many times, of course, but had viewed it only through the rolled-up windows of his car. Somehow he had always assumed that there were no Jews here who required his services. People idled in front of bars, sex shops, and dance halls. Clumps of men hunkered at the street corners. A heap of rags in his path was

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a drunk. This one could be Jewish, the rabbi considered; he had heard somewhere that many alcoholics were ex-doctors and -lawyers. Women tottered on stiletto heels, with faces grotesquely smeared; they leaned against the storefronts, trying to keep from getting wet. All of them called to him. "Hey, pal. Hey, buddy. Hey, handsome." The rabbi walked faster, like a man with a destination. He put his hand to his head. His yarmulke was still there. He should have worn a hat. Why did he insist on going hatless, like a boy? Because inside, I am still that child. The adult approaching middle age that the others believe they are gazing upon when they look at me is merely a disguise. I am still that child, incognito. Should he remove his yarmulke? On the one hand, it did the Jews no good at all that he be seen, so readily identifiable, in such an unsavory neighborhood. On the other hand, he was here on a mission, no different from a priest in his collar. The yarmulke would shield him. When they drop the bomb, your yarmulke will save your life, his father used to say. If he should be held up, all he had to offer was Mazal's poor coins. He had his watch, too, the gold Omega that had been presented to him by his in-laws at the time of his engagement. Too bad: had he known where he would end up, he would have worn his Timex. Of course, there was also the knife with the sterling handle: what would be the best way to hand that over? And then there was his tie clip, in the shape of a key, but that was only brass. It was, as a matter of fact, the key to his house, which had been fashioned into a tie clasp, a clever design to circumvent the injunction against carrying objects on the Sabbath. Thank God it had been the Sabbath after all. Had it been a weekday, he would have been carrying his entire key chain, as well as his wallet, with all his papers inside, and the muggers would have known which door the key would open. Behind that door were Mazal and the children, and maybe Nettie was still there too, her body a shell from which her soul had been sucked out into a vacuum. Rabbi Ozer decided that his father was watching, and so he kept his yarmulke on his head.

If Saadia Rachamim were inside one of these infernal places, would he, too, still be wearing his yarmulke? In the pitch and the smoke, along the bar polished like an eel, among the dancers contorted and spasmodic like the eternally afflicted, among faces singed and scarred—would Yerucham Ozer recognize Saadia Rachamim? What would be the fate of the rabbi himself once he entered? Would a part of him remain behind even if he succeeded in extricating his body? There was no air to breathe. Yerucham Ozer's pupils filled his eyes until no color from the world of light remained. His arms pressed against his sides, his hands deep in his pockets, he thrust himself among the dancers. Brutal dancing it was, bodies slamming against bodies. He was looking for a man, he shouted, a small man, a dark man, a bandit, a traitor. Who could hear him? The music slashed. It was like the nightmares in which he opened his mouth to scream but no sound came out. It was possible to avoid gazing directly at the naked women squirming on the blocks, but comets of flesh darted before him, tempting his vision. He peered into masks. Sandy? Sandy Rachamim? Do you know Sandy? Why must he buy a drink? He was not a client. He was here in his official capacity, to save a soul. Whose soul? Never mind whose soul; a soul is a soul. No souls here, buster; move on. He would not exploit the facilities, not with even one of his senses. He would pinch his nostrils together to avoid smelling the women. "You some sort of pervert, old man? Take off your beanie, Reb, and live a little. Girls, be nice to my pal here, we used to go to *cheder* together." A Jew? "Not only a Jew—a *lantsman*. Ladies, take good care of my friend. He's a nice Jewish boy and he don't beat his women." I can't believe it. Even here, even in this Gehenna, there's always a Jew to say *shalom aleichem*. Maybe the anti-Semites have a point after all: the Jews are taking over the world. From the ice of Antarctica to the fires of hell, you can always find a Jew.

A riddle from his childhood: Why is it always the case that you find the thing you have lost in the last place you look? There was Saadia Rachamim, in the last place on earth. Dancing on the shoulders of a woman six feet tall. Who would have thought to look up? It would be necessary for Yerucham Ozer to climb the woman to get his prize. The ultimate trial. A knife cannot be flung up to its target, at least not reliably, but a gun can be aimed down. Had Rachamim looked down and noticed the yarmulke? The rabbi needed to think, but more than that, he needed to breathe. For a moment he considered taking off his yarmulke to give his brain some air. Lightheaded and nauseated, he cut through the dancers and staggered outside. But it wasn't safe in the street. He looked aimless and feeble, a perfect victim. There was a phone booth at the curb, and he threw himself inside. It stank of every excretion that could come out of every human orifice. The rabbi remembered a picture that had appeared soon after the Six-Day War: a caricature of a Jew, beard and sidelocks, and the nose in all its glory, jammed into a phone booth, tearing off his black gabardine to reveal the Superman emblem. Here, in this phone booth, he, Yerucham Ozer, would take on the manifestations of the Jewish superhero: a Jew taking care of his own, kosher style. Quietly, firmly, no questions asked—a tribal matter. He would stride into the bar. He would drag Rachamim off the shoulders of the giantess. He would slam his knee into the place where Rachamim had sinned. With his silver-handled Sabbath knife he would finish off whatever was left over from Rachamim's circumcision. Justice, cold and ruthless, as it had been ordained in the Book of Exodus: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and so on down the body. For breaking the faith, Saadia Rachamim. A Jew must be better than other people. A Jew must serve as a model, a teacher. For that we were chosen. The rabbi ran his hand along the knife down to the money in the depths of his pocket. He took out some coins, dropped them in the slot, and called the police. □

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FIRST ENCOUNTERS

FREDERICK THE GREAT AND VOLTAIRE

They corresponded prodigiously and effusively for four years. One wrote to "my Apollo," "my Socrates," the other to "my Trajan"; they enclosed their latest poems and swapped compliments accordingly. At last, in September of 1740, the French playwright/poet/ *philosophe* François-Marie Arouet, adopted name Voltaire, age forty-five, was to meet Frederick, newly crowned king of Prussia, twenty-eight. Plans were laid; expectancy soared. "I am sure to faint from joy," wrote Voltaire. Countered Frederick, "I believe I shall die from it."

The meeting would appear doomed to anticlimax, but, on the contrary, Frederick staged it well and Voltaire was a practiced actor.

Traveling incognito westward, Frederick fell ill with the four-day ague. He sent word shifting the rendezvous site (and, more to the point, avoiding Voltaire's mistress, the Marquise du Châtelet) and urging Voltaire to take a fast coach 150 miles to Moyland Castle, near Cleves. There Voltaire found the king wrapped in a coarse blue dressing gown, lying on a narrow bed in a room otherwise completely bare. Voltaire gave a courtly bow, Frederick a royal shiver. Superbly solicitous, Voltaire took the king's pulse, which so revived Frederick that he was able to get up, dress, dine, and discourse at majestic length on free will and the immortality of the soul.

After three days, they parted. Voltaire, persecuted in France, twice took up residence at the Prussian court. His second sojourn lasted more than two years, and the relationship barely survived. Frederick still wrote poetry, but had no qualms about plunging Europe into war.

The philosopher king had a despotic bent. Voltaire concluded that the best of all possible worlds was seriously flawed; besides, there were no women at court. He engaged in a shady financial transaction, spied a bit on the side, poked fun at the king's poems, drank too much chocolate. His departure was maneuvered without either man losing face, but the two were careful never to meet again. —*Nancy Caldwell Sorel*

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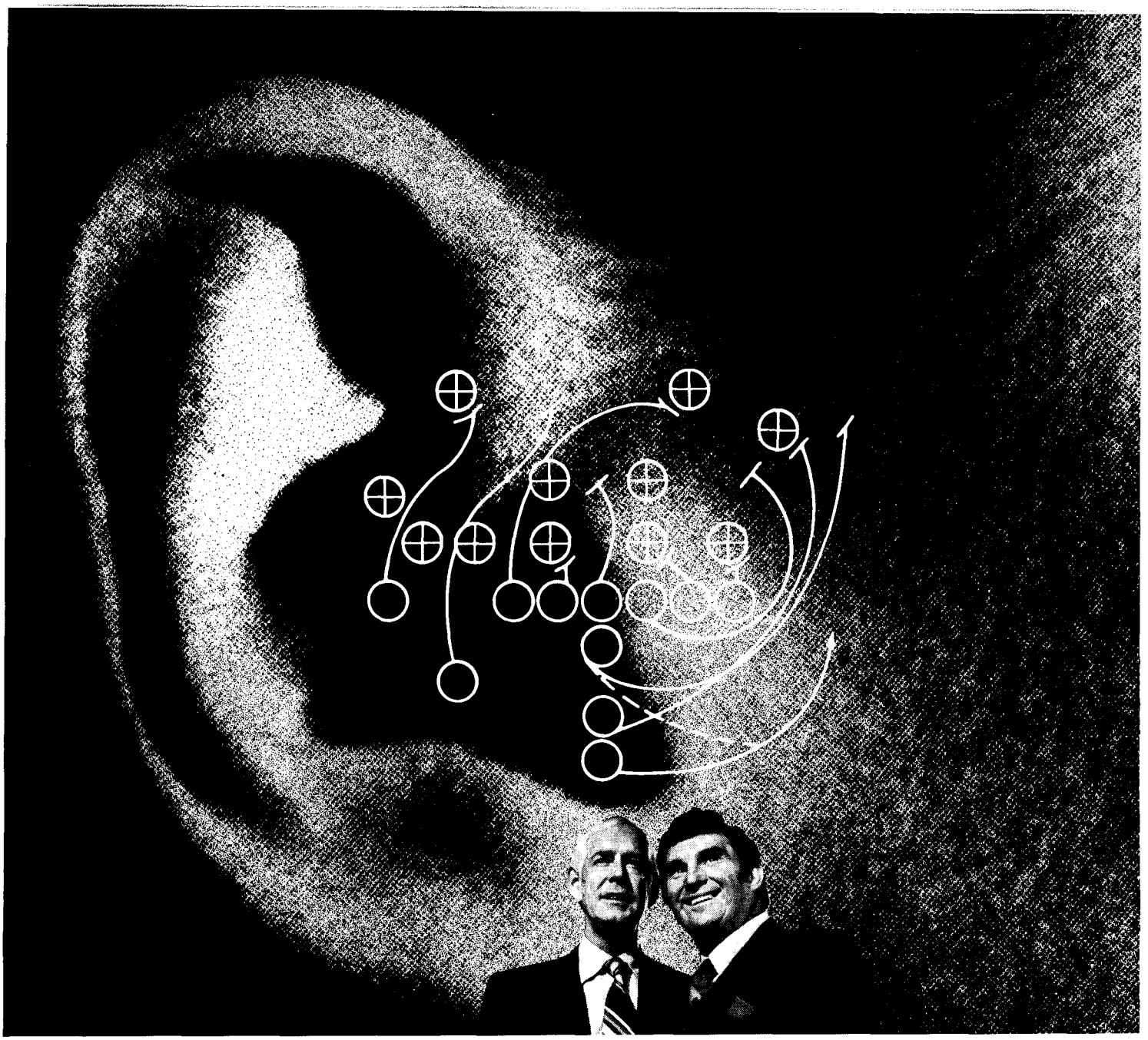

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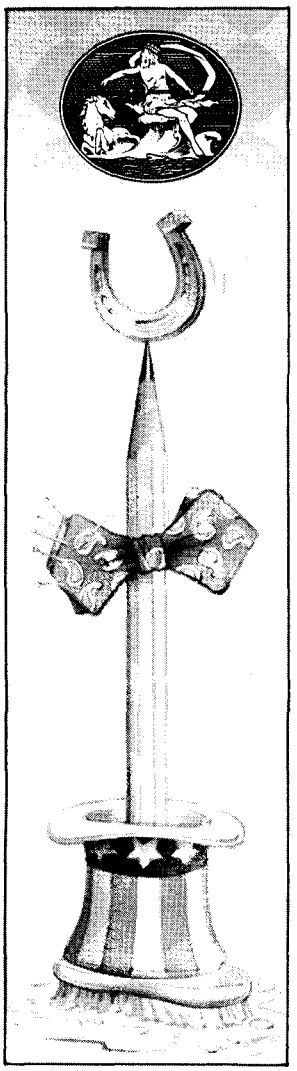
BY GARRISON KEILLOR



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ELLEN IN WICHITA knew that her husband, Jim, and three boys (eleven, fifteen, and sixteen) took advantage of her cheerful nature, expecting her to put a good dinner on the table every night, and not spaghetti but things like stuffed pork chops and creamed potatoes, and also to keep their three-bedroom home bright and attractive, and to be a warm and funny person—all of this on top of her full-time job in sales! She resented their expectations, which, being unspoken, were hard to argue with—especially for Ellen, who believed that love is meant to be given without reservation.

Then the phone rang one night after dinner, while Jim was watching a professional fisherman on television and Ellen was up to her elbows in dishwater. It was Richard Gere. "I want to speak with Jim, please," he said.

Jim was on the phone for twenty-three minutes and all he said was "Uh-huh" and "Sure, I can see that," and when he hung up, he was pale and shaking. The young star of *Breathless* and *An Officer and a Gentleman* had given him a dressing-down he would never forget, pointing out his insensitivity to Ellen's needs. If she had told him about it, he would have shrugged it off, but coming from Gere, it made a deep impression on him, and he decided to change. Thanks to one film star who cared, a family started to function as a team.

THE CALL WAS no random shot in the dark but a carefully planned and researched project of Hollywood Calls, an organization of screen luminaries who want to use their influence to do good. Of course, movie celebrities have always been active in good causes—endorsing charities, appearing at fund-raisers, speaking out on public issues—but many of the younger stars feel that they can have more impact on a personal basis, and dozens of them spend as many as three hours daily on the phone, speaking up for persons like Ellen, whose problems tend to be overlooked by the Red Cross and other major organizations. Unlike the older Hollywood idols who plunged into well-publicized humanitarian efforts in order to assuage intense guilt for amassing fabulous wealth and fame, the young stars feel that they are "actors, no different from anyone else," as one says. "How I spend my time is my business." Few outsiders are aware of the good these celluloid giants do.

It is known that Mark Hamill and Harrison Ford work tirelessly on behalf of young victims of misunderstanding—teenagers regarded by friends and family as "ordinary" although they are filled with deep longings, passionate feelings, and inexpressible thoughts; Meryl Streep and Diane Keaton devote countless off-screen hours to women suffering from poor self-image; Dustin Hoffman is working to get men more involved in early child care; Mr. T is on the phone every night with men who have lost their individuality in large corporations.

"He cares deeply," a source close to Mr. T says. "The corporate life-style is so all-encompassing that after a few years a man who fails to acquire real clout feels terribly diminished. Many of these men relate to Mr. T, and a few minutes on the phone with him can really turn things around. It's nothing that he tells them necessarily but just the fact that he's there, listening, sharing feelings, responding as one man to another."

"Acting is not an expository skill, it's an illuminative art," says one Hollywood Caller, "so an actor can sometimes clear up a problem with one phone call when years of intense therapy haven't helped. I dial a number and say, 'Hello, this is Warren Beatty and I want to talk about you and Janice,' and instantly they *see* the importance of the relationship, they *see* where they're at with it, it's almost electric." Beatty is referring to Janice and Mike's relationship, a marriage of ten years that was threatened by her training in auto mechanics and karate and his inability to accept a shift in sexual roles. Why? Mike didn't know. He knew it was right for her to expand her

Garrison Keillor is the host of the radio program A Prairie Home Companion.

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skills, that his feeling of inadequacy came from fear and was trivial compared with the incredible richness of the relationship, and yet he couldn't get beyond it—until Hollywood called. A top box-office draw saved a marriage. It's as simple as that.

A top draw, it should be said, who himself had failed thus far to make a lifelong commitment to another person. A top draw whose multiple romances filled gossip columns but never gave him the sense of bonding he sought in the shallow, fast-moving film world.

"When I call up these people, ordinary people, middle Americans, and assist them with a problem, I always receive more than I give," he says.

BEATTY HAD NO idea how much he would receive until a month ago, when the white phone rang in his Malibu hideaway—the ultra-secret phone, the number of which was known only to the chosen few—and he answered it. "Warren, this is Julie Dittman, in Muncie, Indiana," said a soft and yet incredibly strong voice. "I want to talk."

His first thought was to hang up, but something—her sincerity, perhaps—attracted him to her, and he sat down and listened for almost two hours as she poured out her concern for him, not as a screen star but as a human being.

"You're defensive, and of course you have to be, with so many unscrupulous people trying to get a piece of you, and yet it has left you hungering for real intimacy in a relationship built on absolute trust," she said, and instantly he knew she was right. She sounded wonderfully close as she said, "I hate to intrude on your privacy, and yet, when I sense hurt, how can I distance myself? How can I pretend that it's not my problem, too?"

He was moved by her concern, moved in a way he had always wanted to be moved and yet had never dared to ask to be moved, and instinctively, not taking even one second to think about it, he asked her to marry him.

She hesitated, wondering if at this point in her life her own growth as a person might be threatened by marriage to the sexual fantasy of millions of women, and then said yes.

It turned out to be the best thing either of them had ever done in their entire lives.

In the fuzzy photograph of them emerging from a Santa Monica laundromat that appeared in *People* recently, Julie Dittman appears to be no starlet but a fifty-one-year-old divorced mother of three who could stand to lose a few pounds. Yet to Warren she is a woman of fantastic vitality, a deeply caring woman, a woman who loves sunsets and children and laughter and long conversations and cats and quiet dinners and going barefoot and listening to Vivaldi, and he nurtures her, accepting his half of all household chores—even though she protests, "No, darling! You have commitments, multi-picture contracts, development deals, artistic obligations!" The forty-five-year-old screen idol scrubs floors, shops for fresh vegetables and fruits, repairs appliances, even cleans the oven.

"Warren has thrown away his career," says one old pal, but has he? Or has he found a new one? One thing is sure: no pal of his dares criticize Julie to his face. Jack Nicholson called her "dumpy" once, and he and Warren didn't speak for days. To Warren, she is the source of happiness. She now takes all his calls, and even if you're a top producer, if she thinks you're phony or stuck-up or only trying to use Warren and not really caring about him, you may as well say goodbye right then and there. □

MUSIC

GUIDE TO MIDDLE AGE

BY STEPHEN HOLDEN

IN 1969, THE YEAR the drums of the rock counterculture beat their wildest tattoos, Frank Sinatra turned fifty-four. Pop music's "chairman of the board," whose rightward-tending politics and friendship with the youth-baiting Vice President Spiro Agnew made him a symbol of establishment cynicism to the Woodstock generation, enjoyed his last Top-40 hit for the next eleven years that spring, when "My Way," a surly roar of self-satisfaction, reached number 27 in Billboard's Hot 100. In 1980, Sinatra returned to the Top 40 with the equally feisty "Theme From *New York, New York*," from *Trilogy*, his monumental three-disc album.

It was with *Trilogy* that Frank Sinatra began to gain the attention of the previously disdainful rock press. *Rolling Stone* ran a review of a Sinatra concert soon after the release of the album which offered the ultimate in rock-critic flattery, comparing Sinatra's singing to that of John Lydon, the Sex Pistols' screaming punk moralist. Instead of being viewed as an enemy of sixties radical-liberal communalism, Sinatra began to be viewed as a kind of proto-punk rocker, spitting at the world with pugnacious arrogance.

More than three years after *Trilogy*, Sinatra's reputation as a pop artist for all cultures—post-counter and post-punk as well as old-guard—has continued to build. In 1982, RCA Records released the complete Tommy Dorsey–Frank Sinatra sessions in three double-album sets. This month, Twyla Tharp will mount a dance piece called *Nine Sinatra Songs* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Linda Ronstadt made a hit album of torch songs, *What's New*, with Nelson Riddle, Sinatra's most gifted arranger-conductor. It included three songs that Sinatra and Riddle had recorded together twenty-five years earlier, on the album *Only the Lonely*.

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Stephen Holden is a pop-music critic for The New York Times.

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Southern California company that in 1982 released a fourteen-disc, $325 Beatles collection, with the discs mastered at half-speed and pressed in Japan, followed it up last fall with a $350 boxed set called *Sinatra*. The collection includes sixteen albums that Frank Sinatra recorded for Capitol Records from 1953 to 1962, when he was at the peak of his artistry. Each record comes with the original Capitol artwork and detailed information about musical personnel and recording dates. Cuts that had been deleted when Capitol reissued the records have been restored, and the set's aural quality is excellent. Beautifully clear and balanced monaural sound on the earlier discs gives way to crisp, deep stereo on the later ones, which, like many stereo albums of the fifties, widely separated the orchestral voices.

Sinatra isn't as complete as the advertising for it implies. Left out are Capitol's first two collections of Sinatra's singles—*This Is Sinatra* and *This Is Sinatra, Volume 2*—which contain such crucial hits as "Young-At-Heart," "Learnin' the Blues," and "Hey! Jealous Lover." And the three later collections of singles that are included—*All the Way, Look to Your Heart*, and *Sinatra Sings . . . of Love and Things!*—are cluttered with junky novelties and second-rate movie songs that no singer could redeem. Another omitted album is one of Sinatra's last for Capitol, *Point of No Return*, on which he teamed up again with his regular arranger-conductor from the forties, Axel Stordahl. Also left out are a Christmas album and soundtracks from Sinatra's movies.

The thirteen core albums, however, constitute a body of pop music conceived for the LP record which, in its scope and consistency, has been matched only by the work of the Beatles. Oddly, the music on *Sinatra* is in some ways more pertinent than that of the Beatles—at least at the moment. Sinatra has, after all, outlasted many of the formidable pop phenomena that were supposed to depose him. Elvis Presley is dead, and his biggest posthumous hit, ironically, is an eerily nervous and out-of-breath rendition of "My Way." The Beatles died with John Lennon. Bob Dylan resurfaces periodically, an erratic bohemian voice in the wilderness, out of phase with Reagan-era realities.

Frank Sinatra is in phase—socially, as a Reagan family friend, and artistically, as a hardy individualist. At sixty-eight,

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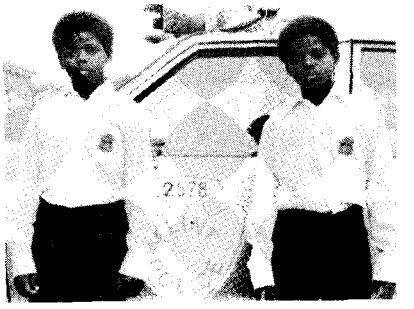

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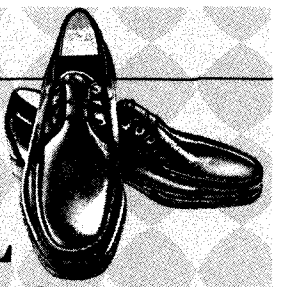

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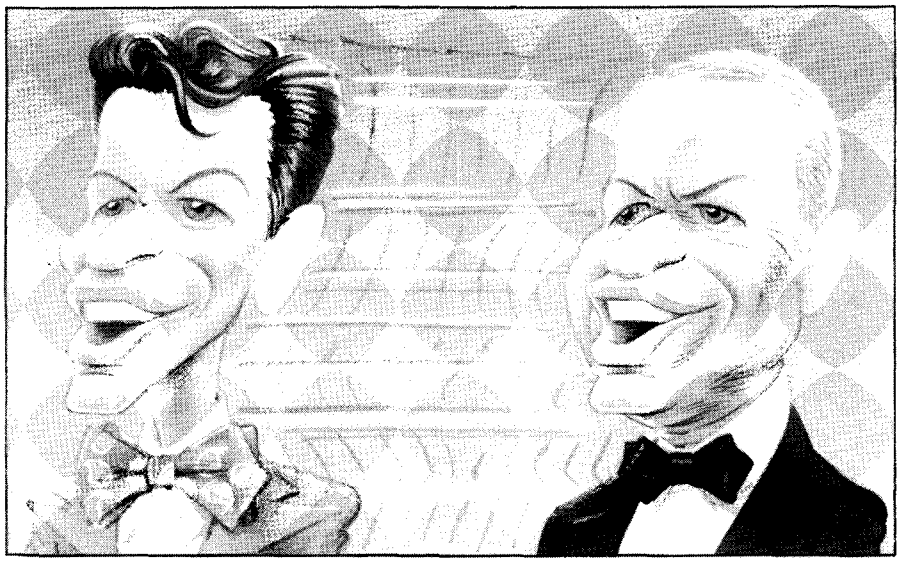
he still gives concerts and makes records the old-fashioned way—with a live orchestra, eschewing rock rhythms and fancy overdubs. And his ubiquitous new signature song, "Theme From *New York, New York*," unabashedly glorifies worldly success. In today's trend-crazed world of pop music, Frank Sinatra is not simply the ultimate survivor but the ultimate victor.

IT WAS IN 1953 that Sinatra, who had spent the previous decade at Columbia Records, moved to Capitol. He was thirty-seven, an age at which all but the most enduring rock acts have lost their followings. Sinatra was not a big star when he made the move—in fact, some considered him a washed-up crooner. But in winning an Oscar that year for his portrayal of Maggio in *From Here to Eternity*, Sinatra made one of the most dramatic comebacks in Hollywood history. The following year, his recording career was rejuvenated as well, as the single "Young-At-Heart" became his first top-five hit in eight years.



The aura of cocky self-assurance in Sinatra's Capitol albums suggests someone who has arrived safely at adulthood having just barely survived an irresponsible and foolishly romantic youth. This posture hasn't changed significantly since, even as the voice has coarsened and darkened with age. The mature Sinatra is a lapsed romantic. While capable of great tenderness, compassion, and joy, beneath the surface he is always reflecting on his loss of faith in the quasi-religious romantic ethos that engulfed movies and pop music in the forties and early fifties. In that ethos, ineffable sexual ecstasy inside marriage was supposed to be everybody's reward for sexual postponement; "true love" was the happy ending everyone was coaxed into anticipating. And, despite a great deal of evidence to the contrary, it was supposed to last "forever."

Sinatra's voice had embodied this dream in the forties with a fervent intensity that no other singer has matched. With his rounded baritone, suggestive of the trombone at its most purringly lyrical, he conjured a fantasy world of tender rapture, at once virile and delicate. Sinatra's bel-canto phrasing turned the most flowery lyrics into plainspoken, believable outpourings of emotion. Faith in romantic love as a possible and permanent salvation seemed built into his voice, which lent a compelling spiritual conviction to the love songs that he recorded in the forties—"The Girl That I Marry," "How Deep Is the Ocean," and "I Concentrate On You," for example. If Bing Crosby, Sinatra's great forerunner, projected a comforting hominess, in which eroticism had its cherished but modest place, Sinatra exalted the erotic with a dedication that made it a world unto itself. Axel Stordahl exquisitely orchestrated Sinatra's best Columbia singles like aural valentines, trimmed with lacy violins and tinkling bells.

It wasn't until the Beatles' psychedelia, exemplified by "All You Need Is Love," that a vision of love was again so thoroughly and successfully captured in pop music. But the love the Beatles conjured was a communal and polymorphously exploratory utopia of peace, cuddly sex, and eternal youth; Sinatra's love had been a yearning daydream. Both visions were rooted in carefully distilled concepts of musical beauty that had been established in late-Romantic European music.

BUT BEAUTY HAS a way of evaporating, and Frank Sinatra arrived at Capitol at just the moment when his voice had begun to lose its spellbinding loveliness. The lapsed romantic had to rebuild his world from inside himself instead of trusting to magic and looking to heaven. In defining his adult self, Sinatra made the first real "concept" albums, in the rock sense. One after another, Sinatra's records explored different styles of adult love and alternatives to love, as the singer tried out different roles: flippant roué (*Swing Easy*), warmly reflective companion (*In the Wee Small Hours*), optimistic, fun-loving hedonist (*Songs For Swingin' Lovers*), happy globe-trotter (*Come Fly With Me*), mysterious loner (*Where Are You?*), jaded sensation-seeker (*Come Swing With Me*).

While at Capitol, Sinatra favored three arranger-conductors: Nelson Riddle (nine albums), Billy May (three albums), and Gordon Jenkins (two albums). With Gordon Jenkins, who used heavy strings and French horns arranged into a tortured Wagnerian chromaticism, Sinatra made the introspective albums *Where Are You?* (his first stereo release) and *No One Cares*. In *Where Are You?* the singer summons the ghosts of old flames with a formal, almost operatic intensity enhanced by a bleating twenty-two-piece string section. In *No One Cares*, made two years later with the same orchestration, Sinatra's voice is frayed and his phrasing hesitant; he "acts" songs like "Stormy Weather" and "I Can't Get Started" as a dark night of the soul.

With May, Sinatra made his toughest, hardest-swinging records. Their third collaboration, *Come Swing With Me*, is a musical fistfight in which two enlarged brass sections throw punches at each other while Sinatra socks out angry, anti-romantic remakes of ballads he recorded in the forties, like "Day By Day" and "That Old Black Magic." This swing has to it almost a rock harshness. Billy May also arranged and conducted one of Sinatra's more mellow albums, *Come*

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Fly With Me, a spirited travelogue that blends ballads with the swinging numbers.

It was with Nelson Riddle that Sinatra struck his most consistent balance between toughness and angst. *Songs For Young Lovers* (1954), *Close to You* (recorded in 1956, with a string quartet), and especially *In the Wee Small Hours*, which may contain Sinatra's warmest ballad performances, sustain a mood of quiet intimacy and reminiscence. In *Songs For Swingin' Lovers* (1956), the quintessential Sinatra–Riddle medium-tempo album, Riddle expanded the orchestra to thirty-five pieces to achieve the optimum hybrid of swing band and Hollywood studio orchestra. "I've Got You Under My Skin," which Sinatra and Riddle jauntily syncopated against a light, finger-snapping beat, becomes not the sophisticated yet abject confession of love that Cole Porter's lyrics imply but the fond tribute of one sensualist to another. In the song's climax, Sinatra admits that for the moment he's a smitten fool, and this exhilarating expression of a perfect balance between intoxication and wry knowingness may be the apex of all his "swinging" music. As Fred Astaire's graceful courtliness transformed Cole Porter's musical sophistication into a dancing style that seems to be the purest kind of pleasure, Sinatra's artfully casual readings of Porter embody a comparably enviable ideal of grown-up fun.

Sinatra and Riddle achieved another peak in *Only the Lonely* (1958), a reflective album that avoids the sepulchral gloom of the Gordon Jenkins records by putting Sinatra musically in the world instead of in a room by himself at 3 A.M.; the cautious bounce of jazz-inflected rhythms and the impressionistic foliage of brass and woodwind choirs in Riddle's forty-six-piece ensemble prompted performances from Sinatra less solemn than those with Jenkins's ghostly strings and horns. For *Nice 'N' Easy* (1960), their last great collaboration, Riddle pared the orchestra back to thirty pieces. All but one of the twelve songs are standards that Sinatra had recorded between 1940 and 1950. Riddle's smoothest arrangements for Sinatra enhance his cool mastery of ballad phrasing. Sinatra stopped acting songs; the album is above all a demonstration of technique.

Sinatra's Capitol years ended when Warner Bros., then a nascent corporate giant, offered Sinatra his own label, Reprise, in 1961. Unwilling and probably unable to come to terms with rock's technology, he continued to sort through his past, as he had on *Nice 'N' Easy*. While Sinatra's Reprise catalogue is rich, it's spottier than his Capitol output, and the explorations of mature aspirations are frozen into patterns. Sinatra the symbol rose above Sinatra the interpreter.

IN THE SIXTIES, when the rock-and-roll culture wrested the airwaves from pop traditionalists and made the rock LP album the musical art form of a generation, Sinatra seemed to have no place in the revolution, which in the end turned out to be more technological than cultural. Today, as we look back, very little of the billions of dollars' worth of corporate merchandise marketed as artistically worthy rock seems to have any enduring value.

In 1969, the turmoils and victories of people reaching middle age were of no concern to a generation so contemptuous of its elders that it cherished Pete Townshend's sneer "Hope I die before I get old." But to those of us who are still alive, the "chairman of the board" no longer looms as a disapproving surrogate parent; he has become an adult role model for how to make it to the top and stay there.

If "true love"—epitomized by Sinatra crooning "All or Nothing at All" or "Nancy" or "Dream"—was a false salvation for the parents of the Woodstock generation, the sexual revolution has proven just as false an ideal. The rock generation may have won the opportunity to prolong adolescent pleasure-seeking for as long as it liked, but it didn't anticipate the complexity of middle-age desires.

What, then, is there to pursue? The albums explore every avenue of possibility except religion: knowledge, reflection, friendship, travel, "swinging" in most of its manifestations, and, finally, accomplishment and power.

One wouldn't ordinarily expect a singer to communicate so much lived experience. But Sinatra's greatness is his ability to lay bare the emotional facts. These albums are about continuing, and not only continuing but trying to get better in spite of the realities of aging. They are heroic feats of self-generation, of finding more with less and gaining in the struggle a reason for going on. □

FASHION

QUOTING CHANEL

BY HOLLY BRUBACH

EVERY ERA HAS an ideal image to which women aspire. The late sixties was the height of our love affair with youth. Movies, magazines, pop music, and advertising extolled the life and the looks of the teenage girl—the prototype was a long-haired, blank-faced, disco-dancing adolescent, thin as a stick, dressed in go-go boots and a mini-skirt by Courrèges or Mary Quant. Today, most women no longer want to look like teenagers. The new ideal is the woman with both a career and a family. She's older, in her thirties or forties; she has come into her own. She has character—you can see it in her face. She looks womanly now. She is wearing a Chanel suit.

The current resurgence of interest in the clothes Coco Chanel designed is not nostalgia, because they can't transport a woman backward, the way a dress by Poiret or Vionnet can. Her designs are not so much of their time as outside time. Chanel steered clear of fashion, which comes and goes, and formulated a style instead. The virtues of that style are, at the moment, at a premium.

"Classic" is the adjective routinely called on to describe Chanel clothes, and now that most women are no longer willing or able to buy a new wardrobe for the sake of a change, classic clothes have the moral advantage. But besides that, today's woman wears Chanel because it's dignified, unspectacular, elegant. It's both proper and sexy, but the sex appeal is that of a woman who's competent, who knows her way around. The schoolgirlish side of Chanel dresses and blouses with soft bow ties at the neck is deceptive. The woman who wears them would look like a good girl, as if she played by the rules, if it weren't for the costume jewelry—fake pearls, cut-glass cabochon necklaces, giant-sized earrings—piled on, gypsy-style. It's the jewelry that gives the Chanel look a faintly naughty

Holly Brubach is a staff writer for The Atlantic.

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edge, that makes it ambiguous and interesting in a way the clothes by themselves are not. The woman the Chanel style conjures up is self-possessed, wise, and mature—of a certain age, or at least of a certain experience.

The clothes in the Chanel fall/winter couture collection, designed by Karl Lagerfeld, one of the most important designers in fashion today, are along the lines Chanel herself drew up and stuck with until her death, in 1971. Chanel has gone down in history as the originator of costume jewelry, the little black dress, Chanel No. 5, pleated skirts, trousers for women, fur-lined coats, and sunbathing, but she has gone down in memory as the designer of the famous Chanel suit, a style so widely copied, even in her lifetime, that it's practically in the public domain.

There are plenty of suits in this season's couture. At the show I attended in Paris, Lagerfeld offered them in striking color combinations, like fuchsia and yellow or pink and pearl gray, as well as in more standard ones, like black and white or navy and white, in fabrics such as basketweave woolens and jersey ribbed to look like corduroy, set off by silk crepe or mousseline. The jackets are single-breasted or narrowly double-breasted, edged in braid, with or without collars. The skirts are straight and narrow, slit or kick-pleated. But regardless of its distinguishing features, nearly every suit is according to the time-honored Chanel formula: a cardigan jacket, with pockets at the waist (for cigarettes), and a matching skirt and contrasting blouse. In the ready-to-wear for this spring, the lines of the suits are elongated but not distorted: the jackets are mostly to the hip, the skirts to mid-calf. Several suits look the same as ever from the waist up but with pants instead of skirts below. The colors are mostly pastels and navy blue, and there are a lot of stripes. In both couture and ready-to-wear, the spirit of Chanel is intact, even if the letter at times seems slightly skewed.

THERE IS NO separating the Chanel style from Coco Chanel's life. What she sold was the way she dressed. It seems safe to say that under Chanel's direction her house never produced anything that she herself wouldn't have worn. Her taste was wholly subjective, and for that reason her designs had the ring of conviction missing from clothes by designers who try to satisfy a variety of women.

The illegitimate daughter of a peddler, Gabrielle Chanel was born in the Auvergne in 1883, and was soon after consigned to an orphanage run by nuns. Other than that, the facts are hazy, because in later life Chanel did all she could to obfuscate her past and frustrate anyone trying to write about it. Some of her biographers, for instance, go along with the story that her father nicknamed her "Coco." Another contends that Chanel came by the name during a brief stint as a cabaret singer, with a repertoire of only two numbers: "Ko ko ri ko" and "Qui qu'a vu Coco?" Chanel's explanation was that it was nothing more than a shortened version of *cocotte*, the French word for "kept woman."

Indeed, Chanel had been taken in at twenty-five by a cavalry officer named Etienne Balsan. But she refused to dress her part, and instead wore plain, dark-colored dresses that put the other *cocottes*, in all their satin upholstery, to shame. Balsan set her up as a milliner, with her own boutique in Deauville and later in Paris. As her business grew, she began making dresses.

Chanel apparently loved wearing men's clothes, which she freely borrowed from her lovers' closets. Menswear gave her inspiration—for trench coats, sweaters, blazers, and for new uses of materials, like wool jersey, that had never been employed in women's clothes. There is a photograph of Chanel setting out to go fishing in Scotland with the Duke of Westminster, wearing his tweeds. The boots she has on are his clodhoppers. His blazer is too big for her. Looking at this picture, you can't help but be struck by how impudent and chic Chanel looks, and by the pride she takes in wearing her boyfriend's clothes.

Chanel cast herself as an arbiter of taste, a role that would take her higher and further than that of dressmaker. She made friends with Picasso, Stravinsky, Misia Sert—the artsy "in" crowd of Paris in the 1920s—and designed costumes for Diaghilev and Cocteau. When Diaghilev died in debt, in Venice, it was Chanel who paid for his funeral.

Already, Chanel's life has provided material for a Broadway musical, *Coco* (with Katharine Hepburn), and a movie, *Chanel Solitaire* (with Marie-France Pisier). The myth that surrounds her life is a fairy tale for our time about a plucky girl who goes to work and earns herself a fortune, who refuses to be tied down to one man in marriage and sails instead from one glamorous affair to the next, who keeps an exotically furnished apartment above her workrooms on the rue Cambon and a bedroom across the street at the Ritz.

The facts are right, but the aggrandizement does Chanel a disservice: her independence seems to have been difficult and complicated in real life. An orphan and a loner, she learned early on, by necessity, how to take care of herself, and then apparently longed the rest of her life for someone to take care of her. Her series of love affairs was not a systematic quest for experience but a string of high hopes and increasingly bitter disappointments. As for her career, she found work that she did well and took relentless pride in doing it. There, if anywhere, lies Chanel's example. She chose to do something when she might easily have done nothing.

IN 1954, AT AGE seventy, Chanel reopened her house, after fifteen years in retirement, with a collection that reiterated what she'd been saying all along. The message was too low-key for the fashion press, which had been expecting something more sensational. But women, especially in America, got the point and overruled the press by buying the clothes. Chanel was a popular success; the critics changed their minds.

From then on, she worked to consolidate her style. She settled on the most

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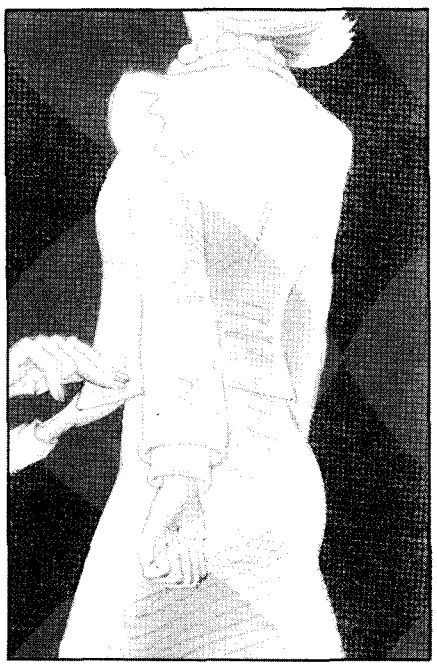
flattering proportions for a suit—the jacket to the hipbone, the skirt to the knee. She perfected the suit's construction: the back panel of a jersey skirt was lined so that a woman couldn't "sit out" the seat; jackets were weighted to hang properly, with a gold chain sewn into the hem; the armholes were cut high, so that a woman could swing her arms full circle and the body of the jacket would stay in place. Chanel designed chain belts as jewelry, to drape across the belly rather than to cinch the waist. Buttons were jewelry, too—big brass lion's heads (because Chanel was a Leo) that decorated the front of a jacket. The clothes, even for evening, became simple and concise, the background for lavish accessories.

As a young woman, Chanel had founded her style on her instincts. As time went on, she brought logic to bear on it and refined it to a science. There was nothing mysterious about Chanel's formula, which was anyone's for the taking. Adolfo has built an entire career on it. Yves Saint Laurent works his own variations on it and frankly acknowledges his debt. Adele Simpson, Evan-Picone, and other middle-priced American lines borrow heavily and regularly from Chanel.

WITH SO MANY designers paying tributes to Chanel—tributes selling for a lot of money—it was just a matter of time before the people at Chanel would decide to cash in and turn out the real thing. The couture had coasted along after Chanel's death under the guidance of her assistants. Then, in 1977, it was announced that Chanel would begin producing ready-to-wear. Frances Stein, a former editor at American *Vogue* and for several years Calvin Klein's right hand, was hired to supervise the Chanel accessories line, which includes jewelry, bags, shoes, and knits. One year ago, Karl Lagerfeld was brought in to design the couture.

So far, this new regime's policy has been to authenticate each collection by reprising in it some of Chanel's designs. In this season's couture, there was a strapless black velvet evening dress, with a black chiffon mantle to veil the shoulders, much like a Chanel dress from 1956. A sleeveless black crepe dress with a heavy white lace bolero overtop in this year's ready-to-wear cruise collection is a direct quotation from a 1937 design.

Of course, a big-name designer like Lagerfeld hasn't been brought in just to reissue another batch of golden oldies every year. His task—and Frances Stein's—is to take the Chanel style and extrapolate from it. Stein does this skillfully, picking up where Chanel herself left off and, by some sort of creative empathy, turning out clothes that look like what Chanel would produce if she were alive today. This winter, Stein brought out the basic Chanel suit in black-and-white cashmere sweatering—an ingenious crossbreed of the tailoring that Chanel was famous for and the soft comfort that makes knits so popular now. The pastel-tinted pearls that Stein is introducing for spring, in pale pink, green,



coral, yellow, and gray, look like a good, inevitable idea Chanel never got around to. Stein reaffirms Chanel's principles; her new accessories line is a clear vote of confidence in all Chanel stood for. Lagerfeld, however, seems to be hedging.

It's no wonder. His attitude toward fashion is one that probably can't be reconciled to Chanel's, if the past is any indication. Fashion in Paris during the 1930s was an ongoing clash between Chanel, the friend of the Cubists, and Schiaparelli, who was a Surrealist at heart. With her "chest of drawers" suit and her necklace of aspirin, Schiaparelli made news while Chanel made clothes.

But the difference between Schiaparelli and Chanel wasn't merely the difference between humor and the lack of it. There's a whimsical aspect to Chanel's designs, too, at least to many from the twenties and thirties. The Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum has in its collection two surprising Chanels: one, a black-and-beige day dress from the twenties, has clouds and rain embroidered on the skirt; the other, a long black tulle-over-crepe evening dress from 1938, is patterned with bright-colored sequin fireworks. A twenties black chiffon chemise, in a sale last month at Sotheby's, is appliquéd with 3-D fabric pinwheels. Each of these is a one-shot dress, but taken together they are evidence of a lightheartedness that is surprising in the sober, upstanding woman who masterminded the suit. So Chanel was no stiff, but unlike Schiaparelli, whose clothes today look like little more than a series of one-liners, she always subordinated the idea of a dress to the image of the woman wearing it.

Chanel and Schiaparelli, or at least the positions they took, still exist in fashion today: Chanel is Yves Saint Laurent and Schiaparelli is, oddly enough, Lagerfeld. In his recent collections for Chloé, there are echoes of her jokey sensibility—evening gowns decorated with *trompe l'oeil* rhinestone shower heads, brooches as spigots, dresses in the shape of electric guitars, and piano-keyboard bracelets. You get the idea that Lagerfeld can't quite bring himself to take fashion seriously. Neither, for that matter, could Coco Chanel, but at least she chose to design clothes instead of facetious commentaries on the changing state of fashion. Lagerfeld seems contemptuous of clothes. In the furs he designs for Fendi, and even in his more wearable numbers for Chloé, he makes "fashion statements," and often important ones. Chanel's clothes, however, were understatements.

YOU CAN'T HELP but wonder whether the people at Chanel got the wrong man for the job. In this season's ready-to-wear, which takes its cue directly from Lagerfeld's couture, there's a white satin evening gown with a *trompe l'oeil* Chanel suit outlined in sequins on the front, a blouse made of fabric patterned with bottles of Chanel No. 5, and big rhinestone 5s to be worn as earrings. I've got nothing against irony, and I can see it in the fact that the style invented by Chanel, who eschewed fashion, has now become all the rage. But I'm not

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January report on

ATLANTIC MONTHLY PRESS BOOKS

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Sometimes our readers are so eloquent on behalf of our books that we cannot resist quoting them. Here is a sampling of comments on **Kenn Miller**'s **Tiger the Lurp Dog**:

"What **Miller** has done, and done superlatively well, is to introduce us to an aspect of the Vietnam War we haven't encountered before. . . . He writes like a man who has been there, who has no axe to grind, who merely wants to tell it like it was. He is convincing."
—**Barbara Bannon**
Publishers Weekly

"A wonderful novel, written from a rare angle of vision. It is that rarest of items in the Vietnam archive, something you can actually believe."
—Ward Just

"**Tiger the Lurp Dog** is an extraordinary story. It comes from a born storyteller."
—General James M. Gavin

"**Kenn Miller** is a wonderful writer. He makes us feel the texture of life of the ordinary soldier in Vietnam."
—Frances FitzGerald

TIGER THE LURP DOG
by Kenn Miller

LITTLE, BROWN

Also available from The Atlantic Bookstore, page 101

sure that an evening gown or a blouse or even an earring is the right place for another designer to remark on that turn of events. In the collections he has designed for Chanel, it's as if Lagerfeld can't make up his mind whether to carry on the tradition or send it up.

Lagerfeld's position at Chanel is unprecedented and ultimately, I think, unenviable. No other house in the history of fashion has, on the death of its founder, brought in another designer with a large reputation and a distinctive style and expected him to work within the confines of its own well-established tradition. Whether or not this is possible is a good question; why Lagerfeld would want to do it is another. The style Chanel set down is so narrowly defined that, if his new designs are going to be in keeping with it, Lagerfeld's hands are tied. After two collections, he still hasn't figured out how to make his mark on the Chanel style without in some way defacing it.

The hoped-for meeting of the minds has turned out to be a polite exchange of views, with Lagerfeld and Chanel taking turns. The most successful numbers in this season's couture were those in which he put his own ideas aside and paraphrased hers: an ivory-and-white wool bouclé suit edged in red, white, blue, and beige; a lapis-blue tweed suit with a long jacket, with closings like brooches and gold chains draped like watch fobs across the front; a fuchsia chiffon evening gown with a train that flows like liquid. Lagerfeld's two cents came in a group of overkilling evening jackets inspired by eighteenth-century furniture and Meissen snuffboxes, festooned with cherubs, gold-encrusted scrollwork, marquetry, and sable. At these prices—$15,000 to $50,000 for the evening clothes, $5,000 to $15,000 for the day wear—most women would expect to get something that would last them the rest of their lives.

Women who bought a suit designed by Chanel had the assurance that it would be timeless, but today's suits look timely instead. The models for the collection wore three-inch-high heels and skirts cut narrow enough to hug their rumps. Presumably, Lagerfeld thinks that touch-ups like these will make the Chanel style look young and racy without drastically altering it. In the end, though, they undermine it. Chanel didn't make clothes to fit snugly or to show a lot of skin. There's a staunch sense of propriety to everything she designed, even her evening gowns, and a faith that what is most attractive about a woman is not the motion of her hips. Lagerfeld has taken the Chanel standard and souped it up. He recognizes the style's integrity, but he doesn't seem to trust it or to think that it's enough. From the looks of this collection, he believes that, in however small a way, a woman has to endear herself to the world. □

COMPUTERS

BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION

BY JAMES FALLOWS

WHY SHOULD foreign-policy experts be the only ones to talk about authoritarian versus totalitarian regimes? The distinction is every bit as sensible when applied to the personal-computer business.

IBM, for example, is a totalitarian force. Since the introduction of its Personal Computer, two years ago, it has pulverized many competitors and destroyed others' will to live. Those that survive have assumed a captive-nations posture, outdoing each other with abject claims of "IBM compatibility."

But WordStar, the most widely used word-processing program, is merely authoritarian. I often think of it as being like a military junta someplace in Latin America. It may be unloved by its subjects; it may have stripped them of their illusions; but still they go about the business of daily life, and they keep their hopes alive. The crowning virtue of authoritarian regimes, of course, is the possibility that they will change. To that cause—reform from within—this article is dedicated; it is addressed to the tens of thousands who live under WordStar's sway.

Dozens of word-processing programs have come onto the market, but the major contenders fall into two camps. One includes Perfect Writer, The Final Word, MemoPlan, and other descendants of EMACS, a program developed in the 1970s at MIT. These programs feature a

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number of gee-whiz options, such as the ability to divide the screen in two and display rough notes in the top half and the final draft in the bottom. The EMACS systems also offer an extremely useful "undo" command, which lets you recover paragraphs or pages of typing you mistakenly erase. The Final Word goes even further. If the power blows while you are using this program, you don't lose everything you've neglected to store on a floppy disk. When the power comes back on, you will find yourself right where you were. (The Final Word automatically saves data on a disk while you write.)

The other camp consists of WordStar. This program, which is the mainstay of MicroPro International, of San Rafael, California, can't perform tricks, but it allows you to do almost anything you'd want to do while writing and printing a letter, a memo, or a book. More important from the commercial point of view, it was there first: when other software companies introduced dictionary programs, grammar checkers, and other geegaws, they first made them compatible with WordStar. In the year and a half since I traded in my venerable SOL-20 computer for a Victor 9000, I have risen above my gripes and relied on WordStar. I chose it because at the time it was the only word-processing program compatible with the Random House Electronic Thesaurus.

I know one man who is truly enthusiastic about WordStar, in the way some people are about cars and most computer-owners are about their machines. But he is the exception. The standard complaint is that the WordStar commands are more complicated than they need to be. Complicated they are, but after a week's use they come automatically. The real problem with WordStar is that its philosophy represents a denial of the computer's most fundamental merit: adaptability.

A computer, after all, is nothing more than a group of circuits through which electrons flow. Certain limitations are built into the hardware itself, but the most important limits on a computer's performance are those designed into the programs it uses. Some programs give you great flexibility to alter those limits; WordStar, though, seems to have taken its lessons on flexibility from Procrustes.

As WordStar users know, each time you turn on the program you are placed in an environment that may be pleasing to MicroPro but isn't very convenient for you. First, you find yourself looking at a MicroPro copyright message, which monopolizes the screen forever (i.e., for almost twenty seconds). Then, as you begin writing, you are confined to the lower half of the screen, since the upper half is filled with a trot sheet explaining the complicated commands. The right margin is set at 64; the screen is set to produce justified columns, which leaves big gaps between words and looks unnatural on most letters and documents. A device called "Hyphen-help," the frustrations of which are difficult to explain but familiar to WordStar users, is always turned on.

True, you can switch these and a dozen other features off and move the margins and tabs to where you want them. The point is that you have to readjust the settings every time you turn the computer on. Most other word-processing programs, including those in the EMACS family, encourage you to change the "default" values of the program—the settings for margins, justification, and the like that the program assumes each time you begin work.

You can do that with WordStar, too, but it's no picnic. Buried in an appendix to the program's manual is a partial listing of the program code, presented in chilly terms sure to frighten off anyone who is not comfortable with computer programming. The manual announces with a grumble that the listings are "supplied for the convenience of the occasional user who may need to install WordStar for an unusual terminal or printer." Where the other programs invite you to tailor their specifications to your desires, WordStar dares you to try.

This is churlish behavior, especially considering that WordStar is far from cheap (its list price is $495). MicroPro offers one solution to the problem: you can buy its impenetrable "Customization Notes" and try to figure out how to change WordStar. Fortunately, there are better solutions. One involves buying an additional program; the other, tinkering with WordStar.

The additional program is SmartKey, marketed by Lifeboat Associates, in New York. It is inexpensive by industry standards ($60), and it exemplifies what adaptability is all about. SmartKey does not interfere with the operation of other programs, but it allows you to redefine any key on your keyboard to mean anything you want.

This can lead to outlandish diversions. I frittered away most of a month turning my keyboard into a "Dvorak" configuration, in which all the vowels are on the middle row under the fingers of the left hand and the most frequently used consonants are under the fingers of the right. This layout is supposed to be more efficient; indeed, the regular QWERTY keyboard was designed to *slow* a typist's fingers, because the keys and connecting rods of early typewriters could not keep up with rapid typing.

I had to give up, defeated, when I found I couldn't overcome twenty years of familiarity with QWERTY. If you want to try it yourself, though, here is the Dvorak layout:

" < > P Y F G C R L ?/
A O E U I D H T N S -
: Q J K X B M W V Z

But SmartKey can also be quite practical. As a means of repairing WordStar, for example, it allows you to program one rarely used key, such as the "=" sign, to handle all the setup commands you have to give when you begin a session with WordStar. You can program other keys to do things that ordinarily take from two or three to a dozen keystrokes with WordStar, such as moving to the beginning of a paragraph, or deleting everything from where you are working to the end of the sentence. Because you can change the assignments of the keys at any point while you're writing, you can temporarily program, say, the "+" key to type "WordStar," as I have been doing here.

The other solution, delving into the WordStar program code, takes a little more initiative but is more satisfying in the end.

WHEN WORDSTAR IS first loaded into the computer, it looks to certain sites in the computer's memory to see what values it should assume. Where should the right margin be set? The number in memory location 380 determines the margin. How long must you stare at the copyright messages and other reminders—such as "new file," which appears when you begin working on something new? The value in location 2D2 controls the duration of the aptly named "long delay."

The easiest way to get at the innards

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of the program so as to change these values is to use the Install program that comes on the original WordStar disk. Under normal circumstances, you deal with Install only once—the first time you run WordStar on your computer and specify what printer and terminal you will be using.

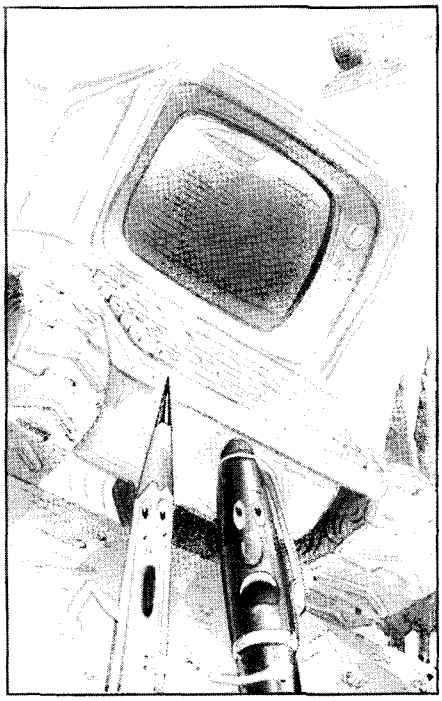
After you've provided that information, Install asks whether your modifications are complete. Usually you answer Yes, but if you type No, you will have a chance to enter new values for the program. If, for example, you want to get rid of the "long delay," you enter its location in the program, 2D2, and then the value you want, which (for reasons to be explained below) should be 1.

Using Install is easy, because all you do is answer the questions that appear on the screen. I'm aware of only one circumstance in which Install won't work. If, like me, you use the Random House Electronic Thesaurus or some other program that itself modifies WordStar, many of the changes you have laboriously made through Install will be undone when you apply the new program. In that case, you must move on to DDT, the Dynamic Debugging Tool.

DDT is a feature of the widely used operating system known as CP/M (for "control program for microprocessors"). It can be found on the operating-system disk, often labeled "Master CP/M," supplied with most computers that run CP/M programs. Using it is not easy, nor is it safe, because unless used with care, it allows you to destroy your copy of WordStar. (So does Install.) In our litigious society, I will attempt to protect myself by urging you to study a CP/M manual before you do anything else.

Under DDT, you can change any part of any program. You put the CP/M disk in one drive and WordStar (a backup copy you have made, obviously) in the other, and then type DDT followed by the WordStar program name (for example, "DDT B:WS.COM"). To make one of the alterations listed at the end of this article, you type S, followed by the memory location you want to change, followed by a carriage return. Then you type in the new value you want to enter at that location, followed by another return. (For example, "S2AE," return, then "00," return.) When you're finished making changes, you must save the revised version of the program on a disk. There is a technical complication to bear in mind. Before you can store the revised program on a disk, you have to specify how many "pages" of memory it occupies. For most versions of WordStar, the right number of pages is ninety-six. Therefore, when you're done making revisions, you should type "SAVE 96 B:WS.COM." If you're using the Random House Electronic Thesaurus, you should increase the number to 105.

One final technicality: the numbers to be inserted into the program must be in hexadecimal notation—the base-16 form of counting, in which the sequence from 8 to 10 is 8, 9, A, B, C, D, E, F, 10. Hexadecimal numbers are often written with an H after the digits. Thus, 40H means 40 hexadecimal, or 64 in normal decimal numbering. If you want the right margin



to be 64, you don't enter 64, you enter 40. A right margin of 62 would be two less, or 3E.

WORDSTAR COMES in slightly different versions for different machines, so some of the changes listed below may not work on every computer. The items on this list, which have been gleaned from various computer publications, especially *Channel 9000*, published by James Lesher, of Los Angeles, should work for any computer that supports the commonly used VT52 terminal protocol. Anyone still reading this article will know what that means.

Long delay, location 2D2. By changing this to 1 (its normal setting is as high as 40), you can reduce by 98 percent the time you spend looking at MicroPro announcements. A must. Also, if you are using the Random House Electronic Thesaurus, you can speed up its copyright message by entering 01 in locations 4798 and 4799.

Cursor speed, locations 2AE and 2AF. By entering 0 in both places, you will allow the cursor to move more smoothly and quickly across the screen as you type—another big improvement. On a few computers, setting this value too low may cause the program to drop characters when you type. If this happens, raise it a little.

Screen appearance, locations 284–286 and 28B–28D. At their normal settings, these locations direct WordStar to display its messages in "inverse video," with dark letters on a bright background. If locations 284–286 are changed to 02 1B 29 and 28B–28D are changed to 02 1B 28, the messages will instead be shown on most computers in an easy-on-the-eyes "half intensity" of delicately shaded grays or greens.

Initial help level, location 360. Set this at from 0 to 3, depending on how much helpful advice you want to look at while you're writing. Three, the normal value, gives the most, 0 the least.

Insert, location 362. WordStar usually operates in "insert mode"; if you enter new characters in an existing line, the existing words will be shoved over to the right, rather than replaced. If you prefer "overwrite mode," which replaces the old characters with the new, change this from FF to 00.

Print style, locations 37C and 37D. Most printers can produce tightly spaced printing, at twelve characters per inch, or looser printing, at ten characters per inch. If you want the tighter (and, to my taste, more attractive) type, change 37C to 0A and 37D to 0C. If you prefer the looser look, don't change anything.

Printing offset, location 37E. Your printer will ordinarily move eight spaces in from the edge of the page before it begins typing. If you'd like something different, change this value from its normal 8.

Left margin, location 37F. The normal value, 0, sets the margin at the left-hand edge of the screen. If you want the margin five spaces over, for example, increase the value to 5.

Right margin, location 380. Same principle. Usually set at 40 (hexadeci-

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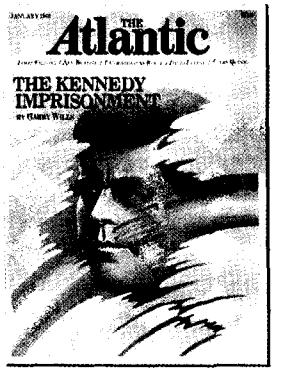

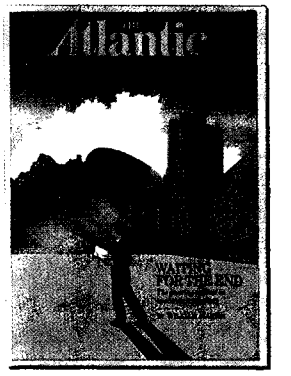

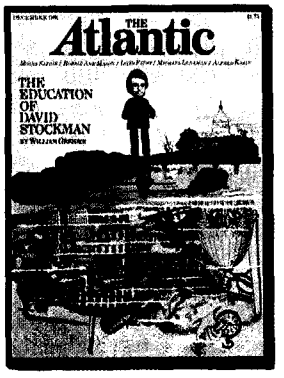

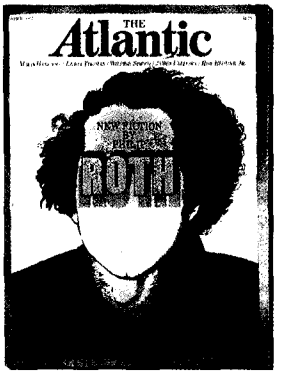

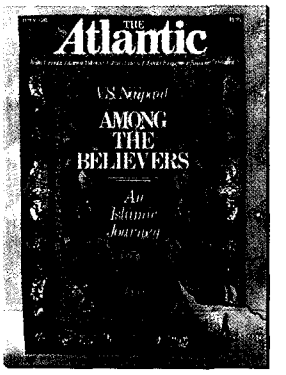

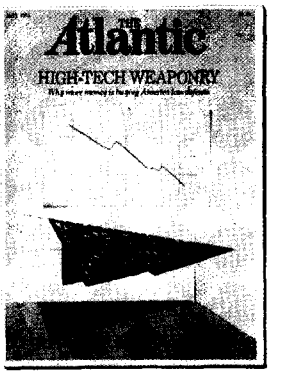

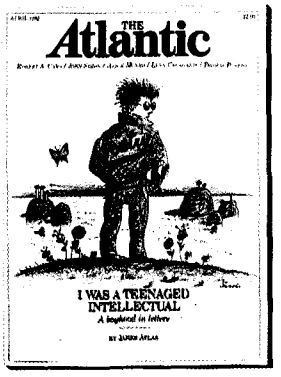

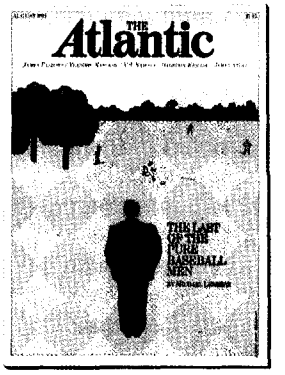

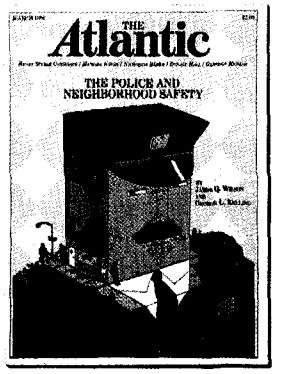

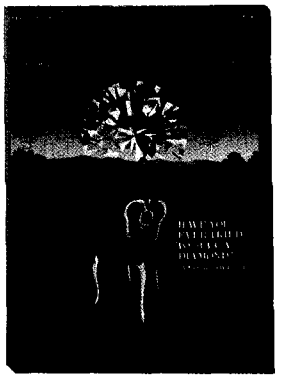

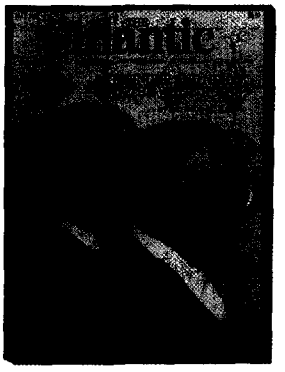

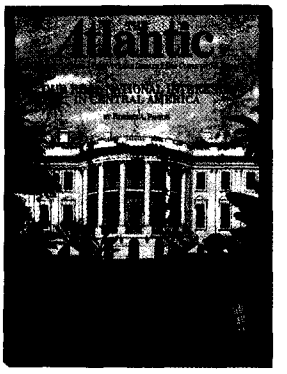

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mal, i.e., 64), it can be adjusted in either direction.

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Hyphen-help, location 389. To eliminate this feature, enter 00, replacing the normal FF. For those times when automatic hyphenation is useful, consider changing location 39A also. When a word is too long to fit within the margin on one line, WordStar will push the entire word down to the next line, in a procedure known as "word wrap." That will leave a gap at the end of the first line; the value in location 39A determines how large that gap can be before WordStar will recommend hyphenating a word instead of "wrapping" it. The normal value is 4; if you change it to 6 or 8, you will have to deal with many fewer hyphenations.

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Page numbers, location 3D3. The normal value, 00, gives you a page number, centered, at the bottom of each page you print. If you don't want page numbers, change it to FF.

Program storage, location 2DC. WordStar and its associated "overlay" programs must usually all be on the same disk, and that disk must be in Drive A of your computer. If you'd prefer to make space on Drive A, for the Thesaurus or other programs, you can move one of the overlays, WSOVLY1.OVR, to Drive B. After doing so, you must change the value in 2DC from 01 to 02.

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More changes are possible, but these will do for now. Freedom doesn't come overnight. □

BOOKS

DICTATORSHIP OR DEMOCRACY

BY ROBERT E. WHITE

TROUBLE IN OUR BACKYARD
edited by Martin Diskin. Pantheon, $20.00/$9.95.

IN REGARD TO Central America, the world divides into three parts. There are those who, like several authors in this collection, exult in the Sandinista revolution, dismiss U.S. security concerns as a pretext for imperialism, and hold John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan equally responsible for the "banana fascism" that afflicts Central America. Then there are the Reagan ideologues who condemn the Carter Administration for driving our ally Somoza from power, look upon the *marxismo* of the Sandinistas as an ultimate evil, and enthusiastically back the CIA-sponsored invasion of Nicaragua in violation of our commitments under the Rio Treaty. In the third category are those of us who shed no tears when dictators topple, and who feel betrayed when Communist advisers appear in large numbers, but who are convinced that covert action overtly applied is precisely the wrong formula to encourage the growth of stable, democratic governments in Central America.

The first two groups will delight in *Trouble in Our Backyard*. Those who think that the United States is foreordained to play an imperialist role will find ample support for their views. Supporters of Reagan's policies will experience that exquisite catharsis that comes to hard-line conservatives when they are attacked by Marxists and liberal academics. The third group, those who believe that the United States has the capacity for a humane, enlightened, and realistic foreign policy toward Central America, will find this book remarkable for its many examples of first-rate scholarship, but will be put off by the authors' unwillingness to recognize legitimate U.S. anxieties about the thousands of Cuban troops in Nicaragua.

There is much to admire in this book. The chapter by Tommie Sue Montgomery, of Ithaca College, "Liberation and Revolution: Christianity as a Subversive Activity in Central America," is excellent on the new role of the Catholic Church, which has rediscovered its commitment to the poor. The Church has thereby earned the hatred of the oligarchs, who see its identification with the poor as tantamount to an identification with communism.

One essay must be singled out for special distinction. In "Reactionary Despotism in El Salvador: An Impediment to Democratic Transition," Enrique Baloyra, a professor of political science at the University of North Carolina, uncovers some basic truths. Among them is the following:

> The leaders of the reactionary coalition of El Salvador *do not believe in unions or in welfare economics or in suffrage*. Their basic premise is that government exists to protect the entrepreneur from undesirable and improper interference by other social actors, so that the reproduction and accumulation of capital can proceed without any restraints. They demand total deference to their vision of the capitalist system, and to promote this they have been willing to espouse a disloyal and antidemocratic conservatism for more than a century.

Baloyra also explains why the land-reform program enacted with U.S. support in 1979 and 1980 would, if continued, have broken the economic basis of the oligarchy's domination. He points out that the most important proof of the profound effect of the reforms was the rightist reaction they provoked: the subversive campaigns of Roberto d'Aubuisson, financed by the "disloyal Right," to overthrow the "highly unstable coalition of military reformers and moderate democratic parties."

To dramatize the reality of El Salvador, imagine a small Third World country dominated by a pro-Soviet military

Robert E. White, the Carter Administration's last ambassador to El Salvador, is Warburg Chair Professor of International Relations at Simmons College, in Boston. He is also a senior fellow with the Center for Development Policy, in Washington, D.C.

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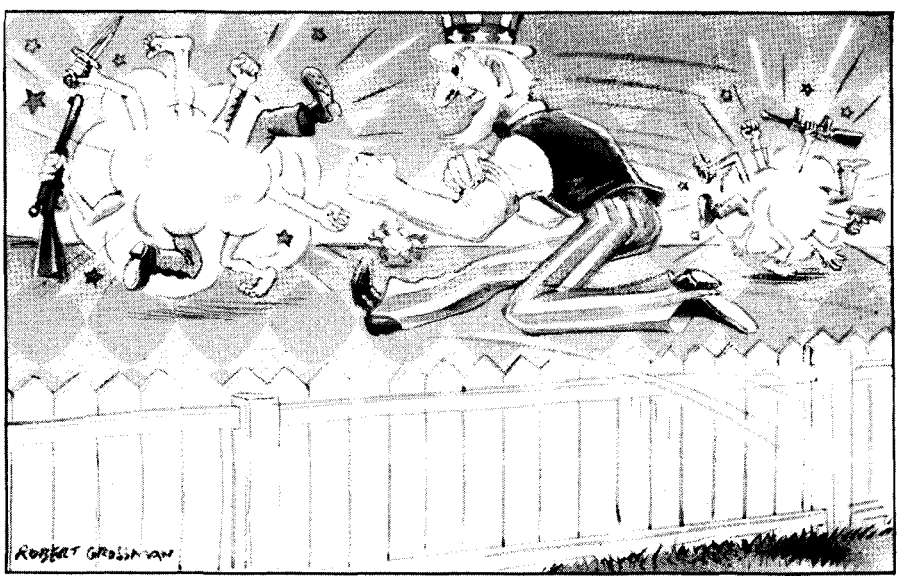
clique that must torture and kill a hundred citizens each week in order to stay in power. Imagine further that this uniformed gang shares its power with fourteen families who by their greed have reduced the majority of the people to a subhuman existence. Imagine finally that the Soviet Union claims that by sending weaponry to this gulag it is helping the forces of a people's democracy and that it reviles those who rebel against brutality and hunger as surrogates of United States imperialism intent on toppling yet another pro-Soviet domino.

The uncritical support of the Reagan Administration for the masters of the anti-Communist gulag of El Salvador brings shame on our country before the democratic peoples of the world. For Central America, President Reagan asserts a Brezhnev doctrine in reverse, which holds that the United States must support the slavemasters so that the slaves may remain free.

In Poland, any worker who identifies with Christianity and Solidarity is persecuted by pro-Soviet Communist tyrants. In El Salvador, any worker who identifies with the Catholic Church and the free labor-union movement is persecuted by pro-American anti-Communist tyrants. The Soviet Union uses Cuba as a bellows to pump oxygen into the fires of rebellion in Central America, not to extend its strategic reach—the Kremlin is too realistic for that. And no doubt Soviet propagandists exploit the fact that Reagan's policy of backing state terrorism against the forces of change places the world's greatest democracy and its greatest totalitarian power on an equal footing—both find it necessary to impose hated governments on peoples seeking their freedom.

Baloyra is practically alone among the contributors in his willingness to understand that reform can substitute for revolution. In his introduction, John Womack, of Harvard, states, "There never has been a center in Central America." A few sentences later he writes, "There the center is a dream, or a nightmare, or a lie of artificially sweet reason to justify an establishment for screwing the poor."

Dead wrong. Men and women of the center are to be found in every country of the isthmus. True, large numbers of them lie in the cemeteries of Guatemala and El Salvador, tortured and killed by government death squads. But moderate, responsible leaders are still numerous, and their appeal to the mass of common people is understood by those who know Central America. Salvadoran centrists include former junta leader Colonel Adolfo Majano; the revolutionary commander Fermán Cienfuegos; the leader of the Christian Democratic Party, José Napoleón Duarte; and the president of the Democratic Revolutionary Front, Guillermo Ungo. Simply belonging to the Salvadoran military does not make a man a bloodthirsty reactionary; nor does the decision to take up arms after exhausting all peaceful paths turn a reasonable person into a Marxist extremist. Such truths escape the authors of this book as well as officials of the Reagan Administration.



THE IMPRESSIVE SCHOLARSHIP that permits Martin Diskin and his collaborators to capture the reality of Central America fails, then, when they attempt serious political analysis and policy judgments. Like the Reagan ideologues, they are forever insisting that in Central America there are only two sides, the extremes of left and right.

An objective analysis of the situation in El Salvador would have pointed out that prior to the election of Ronald Reagan the United States recognized that the revolutionaries had taken up arms in a just cause, that a military victory over them was not only impossible but undesirable, and that the road to peace and security lay through negotiation and reconciliation of the Salvadoran family.

Reagan's policy insists that elections are the only answer and that the revolutionaries must give up their weapons and trust the Salvadoran military to protect their right to participate freely in the democratic process. The revolutionaries who want to negotiate a cease-fire and terms for re-entering El Salvador's politics maintain that the only reason they took up arms was to defend themselves against the systematic terror of a military that for sheer brutality has few equals in the world.

The challenge of differentiating between the dramatically different policies of Carter and Reagan proves too much for the authors, who carry on with the wonderfully simple task of laying bare the grim reality of Central America and the overall tragic course of United States foreign policy. In order to help along their indictment of that policy, Diskin has assigned separate chapters on Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Honduras, but not Costa Rica. Presumably, any discussion of that politically stable and progressive country would have had to recognize that the United States has traditionally acted with sympathy and support for the forces of democracy there. Indeed, on two occasions, the United States used the threat of armed force to prevent Somoza's army from invading Costa Rica.

Trouble in Our Backyard reflects no understanding that the fundamental principles of the United States—representative government and the individual right to freedom of expression—tie the American people to their government so closely that, as the Reagan Administration will eventually learn, it is difficult to sustain a foreign policy inimical to our democratic ethos. Nor do the authors

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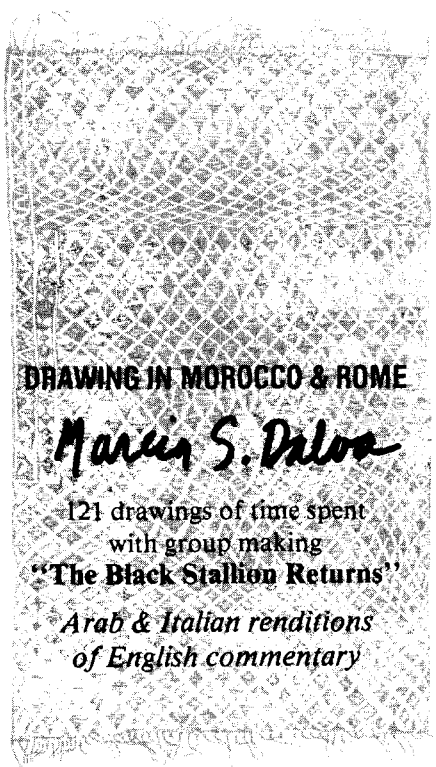

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consider the powerful role our democratic allies can and will play to moderate our policies. Many political leaders of powerful European states are linked to Latin American political parties and are concerned over the divergence between our principles and our actions in Latin America. Dwell for a moment on this observation of François Mitterrand's regarding El Salvador: "The West would be better advised to help these people than to force them to remain under the jackboot. When they cry out for help I would like Castro not to be the only one to hear them."

Any commonsense approach to Central America must begin by recognizing that the order that has traditionally controlled the region is moribund and that an array of new forces will emerge and establish new governments. By our actions we can influence the character of these governments. If we identify with the moderate forces of change, we will gradually transform potential enemies into friends. But if we continue the reckless misuse of power that, under Reagan, has allied us with the military and economic elites, then we will drive current and potential allies into the Communist camp, alienate our democratic friends in Europe and Latin America, and betray our own best values. □

WRITERS ON HOW IT'S DONE

BY JAMES ATLAS

FIRST PERSON SINGULAR: Writers on Their Craft
compiled by Joyce Carol Oates. Ontario Review Press, $14.95.

THE ART OF FICTION: Notes on Craft for Young Writers
by John Gardner. Knopf, $13.95.

FLAUBERT, IN ONE of his didactic, impassioned letters to Louise Colet, argued that the writer should be an invisible presence in his work, so detached from his own creation that the reader exclaims "How is all that done?" That cold objectivity is out of vogue; how it's done is the main topic these days. *The Anatomy Lesson*, the last installment of Philip Roth's Zuckerman trilogy, gives us the inside story: "ten false starts and sixteen drafts and all that pacing around the room." But why shouldn't Roth reveal what goes on behind the scenes? Writers who scarcely have an audience can be found discussing their methods of composition in Stephen Berg's recent anthology, *In Praise of What Persists*, and now Joyce Carol Oates has come out with *First Person Singular*, a collection of essays, interviews, and reminiscences in which a variety of known and less known hands discuss their "craft."

Berg's anthology, however uneven, is organized around a single theme: contributors were invited to "explore personal experiences that have significantly influenced their lives and their work." Oates's is a more haphazard affair: there's no introduction, and I could discover no organizing principle. Interviews, memoirs, essays, polemics—whatever Oates read and liked over the past few years, I suspect, went into this collection. If there's any generalization one can make about a group of contributors as diverse as John Updike and Ned Rorem, William Stafford and Bernard Malamud, it's that great writers talk about their work with ease and less great writers talk about their work with . . . less ease.

The poets, who've been having a hard time finding an audience lately, do their case no good here. Dave Smith's "Assays" is a heavy-breathing meditation that doesn't survive even grammatical scrutiny ("Feeling cannot exist apart from the context of generational events and the poem's voice than it could exist apart from the creative music of words and phrases in the harness that is the form of the poem"); Hayden Carruth drones on in an essay about poetic form, laboring distinctions ("The form *is* the apple") that elude his grasp; John Hollander, emulating the French practitioners of *écriture*, writes about the act of writing in a mannered voice that's meant to be whimsical but that could hardly be more self-conscious. The efforts of these poets to elucidate their work have a tentative, groping tone, a coy sensitivity ("Elms, maples, and *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* were fundamental to my early years") that would have had a no-nonsense critic like Randall Jarrell drumming his fingers on the seminar table and staring moodily out the window.

Not that the poets are the only ones capable of incoherence. John Hawkes, interviewed by two fawning acolytes,

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comes across as curiously unsure of himself, speculating one minute that he's the victim of "a strange conspiracy, conscious or not, to keep my work from getting really public attention" and asserting the next that he's "quite invulnerable as a writer." Hortense Calisher's hectic prose careers from one bewildering declaration to another ("Modern times is a bad place for seeing the great metaphors that all art must have") and lurches out of control: "An age when change can be caught like quicksilver and held up against the gloss of what we think we remember, where all the gauntlets of starvation and curtailed freedom are still thrown down to us, while sex will be our aphrodisiac and the documents our earthly paradise—who can fail to recognize that description?" Who indeed?

Still, the old pros are as diverting as ever. John Updike's lecture "Why Write?" defends the writer's "shabby, precarious, and even craven" life with his usual shrewd eloquence. Malamud and Bellow answer the same tired questions they've answered a hundred times ("Are you a Jewish writer?") as if they've never heard them before. Their spoken voices echo their literary styles. Bellow is haughty, learned, contemptuous, at once a cranky moralist and a comic working the crowd. He manages to let drop in an interview that he attended a White House dinner, but in such an offhand way that it doesn't even seem like boasting; a man of the people, he prefers to be honored in Chicago. Describing a ceremony at which Mayor Daley presented Bellow with a check from the Midland Authors' Society, he recalls with obvious delight Daley's reply to a reporter who asked him if he'd read *Herzog*: "I've looked into it." "Art is not the Mayor's dish," says Bellow. "But then why should it be? I much prefer his neglect to the sort of interest Stalin took in poetry, phoning Pasternak to chat with him about Mandelstam and, shortly afterwards, sending Mandelstam to die."

Malamud's interview, reprinted from the *Paris Review* series, is like a Zen parable; every question is deflected, dodged, refined, and handed back in the form of an aphorism. "What about suffering?" says the dogged interlocutor, as humble and earnest as a character out of *The Magic Barrel*. "I'm against it," retorts Malamud, "but when it occurs why

James Atlas is an associate editor of The Atlantic.

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waste the experience?" Asked if the novel is dead, he predicts, "It'll be dead when the penis is."

The liveliest voices in this collection are always telling stories to illustrate some point. Instead of just claiming that writers are treated with more respect in other cultures, Bellow recalls the time he entered a restaurant in Paris with a French novelist whom the waiter addressed as "Maître." Comparing the fictive imagination with a child's innocent play, Updike describes what it was like to sit drawing at the dining-room table, "under a stained-glass chandelier that sat like a hat on the swollen orb of my excitement." Anecdote, parable, analogy: these are the writer's basic tools, and they should never be put aside, no matter what the task. William Heyen's account of a drunken evening spent waiting for a still more drunken John Berryman to arrive—how Heyen and his English-department cronies sat around playing poker, how Berryman, once he got there, scattered ashes all over the house and screamed at his wife on the phone—gives a more vivid sense of the demands poetry makes on its practitioners than any of the essays in this book.

How it's done *is* interesting, and a valid literary subject. Many of the contributors to Oates's anthology will reach a wider audience through it than they ever reached with the work that prompted these essays and interviews. Besides, who can deny the appeal of gossip? To learn that Mark Strand wrote one of his books while his marriage was failing and that Adrienne Rich had three children before she was thirty makes the authors more vivid to us than do their difficult, evasive poems. This is why biographies of writers are so popular and why *The Paris Review* has its interview series, *Esquire* its "Why I Live Where I Live" feature, *The New York Times Book Review* its "Making of a Writer" column. Writing is a private activity, but a writer is a public figure—"an instrument," in Updike's words, "a means whereby a time and a place make their mark." And the more finely tuned that instrument is, the more curious we are about how it works.

To those who are *really* curious, I can recommend two manuals by the late John Gardner, whose posthumous output exceeds that of even prolific living novelists: *On Becoming a Novelist*, which Harper & Row brought out last spring, some months after the author was killed in a motorcycle accident, and its sequel, *The Art of Fiction*. More impromptu than its predecessor, this compilation of notes, advice, obiter dicta, and class exercises is animated by the same attractive zeal.

What was so appealing about *On Becoming a Novelist* was Gardner's fervent practicality. He believed that being a writer was a useful vocation, that writing could be taught, and that nearly anyone, with enough hard work, could become one. It was clear from his impassioned account of how he himself learned to write, and from the enthusiasm with which he imparted what he knew, that he regarded literature as a high calling. Yet he never romanticized it. The beginning writer had to be "driven," afflicted with a "daemonic compulsiveness"; he had to possess "the stamina, patience, and single-mindedness of a draft horse." Nerve, conviction, will: these were the traits Gardner emphasized. "Mastery is not something that strikes in an instant, like a thunderbolt, but a gathering power that moves steadily through time, like weather." Randall Jarrell claimed that the poet is struck by lightning maybe half a dozen times in his life; the novelist has to slog on like the mailman to complete his appointed rounds.

On Becoming a Novelist is crammed with lore: what books to read; what kinds of workshops are useful; how to get an agent, an editor, a grant; how to induce the dreamlike state essential to composition. Gardner takes apart stories, paragraphs, sentences, words. He shows us how other writers did it, comparing the "tentative" opening of *Omoo* with the "booming, authoritative voice" of Ishmael in *Moby Dick*. (How gratifying it is to be reminded that even Melville had trouble loosening up, something you don't learn in American Lit.) But for all its practical advice, *On Becoming a Novelist* is really a book about the inward hazards of the trade—the loneliness, the sense of neglect, the doubts and self-absorption—and the hard-won pleasures that make it all worthwhile. Writing novels is "a *yoga*, or 'way,' " Gardner insists, "an alternative to ordinary life-in-the-world." The rewards it offers are "spiritual"; they enable the writer to make sense of his experience in a way offered by no other profession, and to do it on his own terms, charged with the conviction that "*he* is life's hope, *he* is the Messiah."

That book was Gardner's Tao, a handbook for seekers of literary enlightenment. *The Art of Fiction* is a practical guidebook, a primer that shows the reader how the novelist does it: how to vary the length of sentences, how to structure narrative, how to avoid the passive voice, sentences that begin with infinitives, and inappropriate diction. Some of what Gardner has to say might seem obvious: we expect characters who've been introduced and described to return to the narrative, even if only in another character's thoughts; the protagonist must change in the course of the narrative ("the central character must act, not simply be acted upon"); a plot must have exposition, development, and denouement. Gardner's two key terms

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are *profluence*, "our sense, as we read, that we're 'getting somewhere'," and *energeia*, Aristotle's term for "the actualization of the potential that exists in character and situation." In Gardner's paraphrase, "Certain forces, within and outside the character, must press him toward a certain course of action, while other forces . . . must exert strong pressure against that course of action."

If this sounds self-evident, it is, and Gardner can get to be pretty tiresome on the whole subject. He glosses plots with hectoring tenacity, like a schoolteacher addressing a classroom of inattentive seventh-graders, and the exercises in the last chapter are naive: "Write the first three pages of a tale" and "Describe a landscape as seen by a bird. Do not mention the bird." No one can learn to write a novel by reading such a primer, any more than one can learn to write a novel from a creative-writing seminar. The only way to learn is to do it, and even that's no guarantee. Gardner himself was known to ignore the advice he hands out here with such breezy self-assurance; too many of his novels were ponderous and ill conceived, and the last one, *Mickelsson's Ghost*, was a disaster. (Writing it brought him to "the edge of despair," he confesses in *On Becoming a Novelist*, and I can see why; he forgot all about *profluence* and *energeia*.)

What Gardner does offer in these two books is reassurance that writing is a legitimate activity, a rational thing to do. "For better or worse, the practice of fiction changes a person," he declares in *On Becoming a Novelist*. Writing fiction demands empathy and forces the novelist to become "as impartial and detached as God, giving all human beings their due and acknowledging their frailties." (See Flaubert: "An author in his book must be like God in the universe, present everywhere and visible nowhere.") In *The Art of Fiction*, Gardner distinguishes between "faults of technique" and "faults of soul," which include "sentimentality" (effects achieved by manipulating the reader); "frigidity" (indifference to one's own characters); and "mannerism" (posturing or self-importance on the writer's part, putting himself forward in his prose). It was Gardner's conviction that the writer could become aware of these flaws in his own nature and conquer them on behalf of his art.

Is this true? Whether literature is good for society—whether it has a moral function—is an old question. (Gardner

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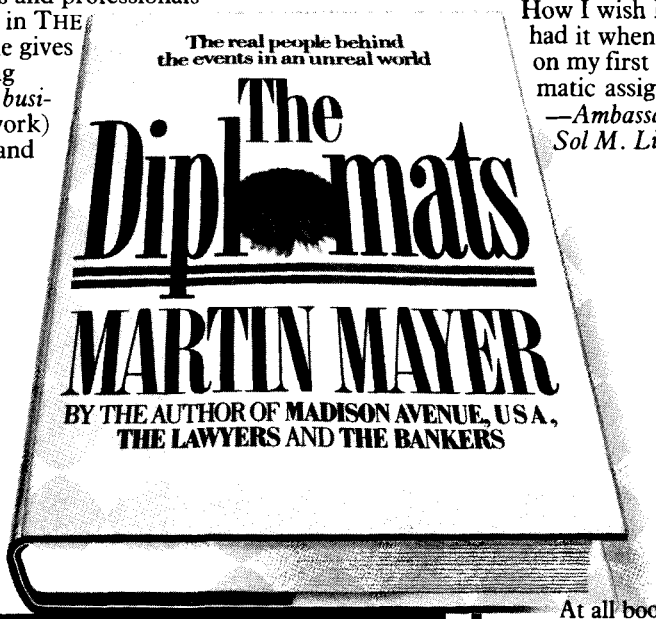

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was convinced that it is, and that "art produces the most important progress civilization knows.") But that the artist himself is changed by his art, that he becomes a more sentient person by virtue of what he does—here Gardner is making a different claim. An awful lot of creeps have produced great novels, but Gardner's vision of the literary life is utopian; it posits a world in which a writer could labor for years, enduring poverty, neglect, humiliation, and then stride into a publisher's office one day in a leather jacket and emerge with a three-book contract. A world where such a thing could happen—this is Gardner's version of how he got his start—is a world where the novelist can attain the sort of transcendence once reserved for perfect masters: "The true writer's joy in the fictional process is his pleasure in discovering, by means he can trust, what he believes and can affirm for all time." Most novelists I know would probably settle for a less exalted form of joy—getting published, being read—but even writers have their fantasies. □

SHORT REVIEWS

DARK VALLEY DESTINY *by L. Sprague de Camp, Catherine Crook de Camp, and Jane Whittington Griffin. Bluejay Books, $16.95.* His biographers credit Robert E. Howard with the creation, "almost single-handedly," of what has come to be called "heroic fantasy," meaning blood-and-bash adventures trimmed with supernatural monsters. Medieval Iceland produced similar tales, involving more wit and less gore, but since Howard was spottily educated, and isolated in a small Texas town, it is unlikely that he had encountered any of them. He had encountered plenty of mythology and romantically inaccurate history, and pilfered those sources with insouciance, but Conan the Barbarian has to be considered his own invention. The man whose imagination spawned the indomitable and undomesticable Conan, although plagued by groundless fears and baseless hatreds, was generally well behaved and so thoroughly tied to his mother's apron strings that while she lay in a deathbed coma he shot himself. He was thirty years old and a well-established contributor to *Weird Tales*. He was also, as one observer put it, "nutty as an almond bar." Mr. and Mrs. De Camp (the late Dr. Griffin must be considered an honorary author) explain the reasons for Howard's psychological deformities plausibly but far too often. Their professed respect for his fiction is vitiated by the fact that both are engaged in concocting more Conan tales. Their admiration for his poetry—verse that can reasonably be described as promiscuously imitative—is indefensible. Despite these weaknesses, the biography that Mr. and Mrs. de Camp have written is thoroughly interesting, for Howard was a weird tale in himself.

SOMME *by Lyn Macdonald. Michael Joseph, $19.95.* The Battle of the Somme began in the heat of July, 1916, and ended in November frost. At the cost of 150,000 dead and 300,000 wounded, the British line was advanced about seven miles. That battle exemplified the miseries of trench warfare at their worst, and the reminiscences of survivors that Ms. Macdonald has assembled in this vernacular history are painful, indeed almost unbearable, in their intimate view of horror and heroism.

NIGHT CATS *by Anthony Taber. Congdon & Weed, $7.95.* Mr. Taber knows what goes crash in the dark and draws it. His round, moon-eyed cats do what ailurophiles will happily applaud and what even the most paranoid ailurophobe would fear to imagine.

ART OF LIMNING *by Nicholas Hilliard. Northeastern University, $25.00.* Around the year 1600, the great English miniaturist wrote the only known "discussion of the art of portraiture by any portrait painter in the sixteenth century." It survived in manuscript copies and has never before been published in this country. Transcribed by Arthur F. Kinney, supplied with commentary and notes by Linda Bradley Salamon, Hilliard's text, despite the vagaries of Elizabethan punctuation, conveys the living voice of a man who loved his art and gave it serious thought. It also conveys a real understanding of his meticulous technique, of the composition of his materials, and, by implication, of his character. Sitters must have found him charming. Apprentices must have found him impossible.

FOGGAGE *by Patrick McGinley. St. Martin's Press, $11.95.* In the past, Mr. McGinley has written well-plotted mysteries with an Irish setting. His latest book is not a mystery and has no plot worth consideration. It is simply the dour chronicle of disasters befalling an Irish farmer equipped with large sympathies and little common sense, and if *Cold Comfort Farm* were not already written, this novel would be enough to inspire it.

ALL THE EMPTY PALACES *by Beverly Whitney Kean. Universe Books, $29.50.* The superb collection of early twentieth-century art owned, if not always appreciated, by the Soviet Union was amassed by a small group of Moscow merchants at a time when neither Paris nor Westernized St. Petersburg saw much good in the likes of Matisse and Picasso. The Moscow patrons were remarkable for their vision. They were also exceptional men, and were supplied with a network of variously daft or distinguished connections. Ms. Kean's reconstruction of their world, of the reasons for their enthusiastic acceptance of the new painters, and of the effect of their importations on Russian art is fine social as well as aesthetic history.

MY DEAR PARENTS *by James Horrocks. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, $13.95.* In 1863, James Horrocks, on the run from a paternity suit, arrived in New York. Since nobody cared to employ a nineteen-year-old greenhorn from Lancashire, he enlisted in the Union Army, planning to pocket the various bounty payments and desert at the first hint of battle. One can hardly blame Horrocks. It was not his war, and the federal blockade was strangling his father's cotton mill. Desertion, however, proved more difficult and less attractive than he had foreseen. He remained in the army to the war's end, winding up, via shipwreck, on the Mexican border with the force sent to encourage removal of the Emperor Maximilian. Throughout his service, Horrocks, who wrote well, sent long, affectionate, amusing letters to his family, and these letters, edited by A. S. Lewis, have survived to delight Americana addicts. Horrocks was observant and inquisitive. He reported the prevalence of "bier" saloons, noted "Jersey Lightning" and fireflies, and checked out the prices in the officers' commissary. He discovered a plant that struck him as a

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promising substitute for cotton and learned, with regret, that it was cotton, albeit a wild specimen. He deplored his inability to ship home either a tarantula or a horned toad. He quoted what must be an authentic verse of "John Brown's Body," for the Horrocks family was not heavily encumbered with Victorian delicacy. Although he constantly assured his relatives that he was in no danger, scattered details indicate that the claim was somewhat exaggerated. In truth, Horrocks rather liked the army and definitely liked the country. Slowly, unintentionally, the letters reveal his conversion from footloose mercenary to permanent settler. He never lived in England again.

A Word in Your Ear *by Philip Howard. Oxford University Press, $12.95.* The Literary Editor of *The Times* of London believes that despite all attempts at reform and preservation, the English language remains "in rude health." He likes to root around in it, however, and his essays on the history, perversion, use, and misuse of words turn up odd and amusing bits of information. He is even capable of attempting to explain, to his English readers, the use of "tailback" in American football—surely valor beyond the call of duty.

The Galapagos Affair *by John Treherne. Random House, $14.95.* Friedrich Ritter was a German doctor whose brain had become so addled by his study of Nietzsche and Rousseau that he withdrew, accompanied by his adoring paramour, to Floreana Island, in the Galapagos, to practice heroic philosophy and the simple life. This was in 1929, and since the pioneers had abandoned their respective spouses, publicity ensued, engendering international interest in the venture and attracting a few other settlers to the place. One of the newcomers was a mad pseudo-baroness, who proposed to erect a resort hotel for yachting millionaires. Floreana is too small an island to house a brace of lunatics. The blowup, when it came, was extensive, but exactly what happened remains a puzzle to this day, in spite of Mr. Treherne's extensive research. His account of events leading up to the catastrophe makes enthralling reading for anyone with a taste for macabre absurdity. His suggested solution for the affair is reasonable . . . but those people were not reasonable, and the mystery remains.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams

Answers to the December Puzzler, **"MEDLEY"**

1 M	U	2 S	3 C	4 L	E	5 D	6 I	T	7 H	8 E	9 R
10 O	V	E	R	11 I	N	O	R	C	A	V	E
12 R	13 E	V	I	S	E	W	14 T	O	T	E	S
A	G	E	T	T	15 R	A	I	M	E	N	T
16 S	O	R	T	E	D	17 G	E	O	R	18 G	E
19 S	I	L	E	N	20 C	E	D	21 F	S	A	D
22 L	S	23 S	R	24 C	25 A	R	26 P	O	R	T	27 S
28 A	T	T	I	L	A	29 S	O	O	30 T	H	E
31 T	32 R	A	C	E	R	Y	T	T	R	E	N
33 E	E	T	E	R	E	34 S	A	B	E	R	S
N	N	35 I	M	I	T	A	T	36 L	A	N	E
37 T	O	N	I	C	S	38 F	O	L	D	E	D

Deleted letters spell "mixed bag."

Across. 1.–5. DI-THE-R (*I'd* rev.); M-USCLE (*m* + anag.) 10. EVE-N 11. MINORCA 12. REV-IS-E 14. SET-TO 15. MI(NARE)T (*near* anag.) 16.–17. G(E)ORGE; SORTED (anag.) 19. LICENSE (hidden) 25. AIRPORTS (anag.) 28.–29. ATT-ILA (*Ali* rev.); S(OOT)HE (*too* anag.) 31. T(RACE)RY 33. EXETER (homophone) 34. SABER-S (anag. + *s*) 35. IMITATE (anag.) 36. OVER (anag.) 37.–38. F(OLD)ED; TONICS (anag.) *Down.* 1. LISTEN (anag.) 2. (in)VERSE 3. C-RITTER (*c* + anag.) 4. RESTED (homophone) 5. DO-WAGER 6. D(IRT)IED 7. HE-ARTS 8. RENO (anag.) 9. L(A)-TENT 13. STOGIE (anag.) 18. GA(THE)R 20. CA(BARE)TS 21. FOOTBALL (anag.) 22. M(OR)ASS 23. STA(TIN)G 24. CIRC(L)E 26. POT-AT-O 27. SE(N)SED (anag. + *n*) 30. RATED (anag.) 32. LA-NE

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BY EMILY COX AND HENRY RATHVON

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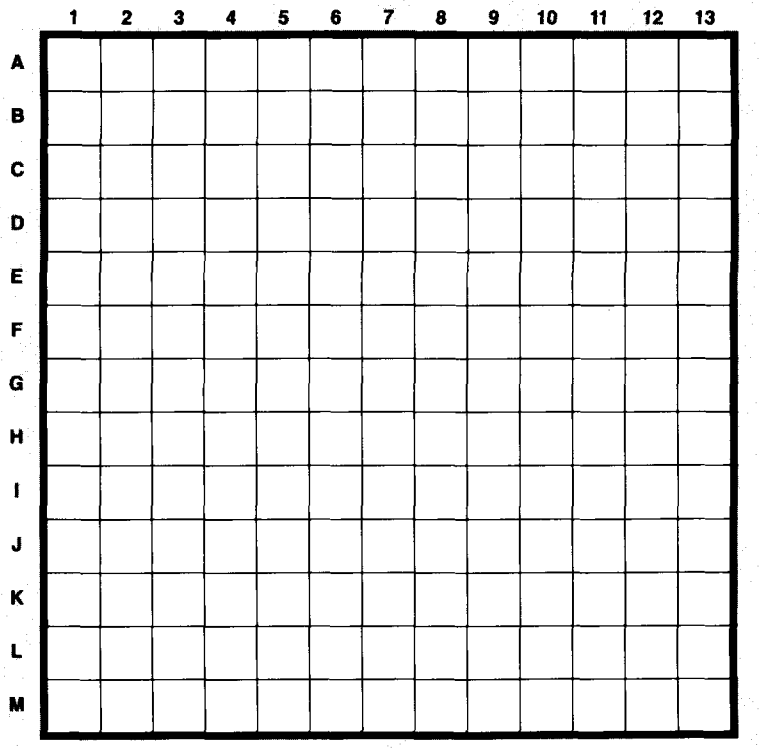

The solution to last month's Puzzler appears on page 101.

CLUES

1. Disagreeing with a guy like Cousteau? (9) (I12,M6,G1,A2,L13,B1,K5,D10,J11)
2. Stick around *Love Boat* (5) (I7,A4,K4,E8,J8)
3. What's five hundred and eight divided by fifty, please (7) (C6,M13,H12,D5,E13,B9,K8)
4. Rodent in country catching cold (10) (I6,B2,F1,H7,C9,G11,G4,C5,G7,B11)
5. A sick writer . . . (6) (H8,E12,I10,L7,F12,F5)
6. . . . or healthy writer (6) (E3,M12,J9,A7,F4,H11)
7. Importance of being around England's capital (6) (H3,M11,K13,B8,J12,E6)
8. Crook's intuition (5) (B4,A13,J1,A6,M10)
9. Charge, or pull back (4) (L10,M3,I11,A8)
10. Couple cut end off string (4) (M9,C1,J10,B6)
11. Author secretly and surreptitiously wore tights (10) (M8,A10,C11,K12,D4,G3,E4,B7,J6,G12)
12. Rank binder (4) (B3,H10,C2,J5)
13. The pop singer over there is a rushed worker? (8) (A9,L11,C8,M2,J2,D7,E1,G13)
14. Admitted a selfish emotion (6) (I13,M8,A11,E5,G2,D12)
15. A phrase in Shakespeare for a meal-making establishment (5,4) (A1,L9,B10,C4,D3,I5,F10,E9,F4)
16. Noise of toppled chair (6) (G5,C10,K11,E11,M7,D2)
17. Nobody has time for music (5) (H6,A12,K1,B5,J6)
18. Dessert makes her be tubby in the middle (7) (M1,C3,I1,A11,D13,G8,D8)
19. Stupid place to stay in the Big Apple (5) (B12,B7,H6,L1,K6)
20. Herb gets cipher ass-backwards (7) (E8,J5,C7,D6,A4,I4,F13)
21. Leading riots put in order (7) (L9,G7,K13,D6,B12,F3,I12)
22. Blue feathers (4) (A3,K2,L10,H7)
23. Disbeliever near the scene of a robbery? (7) (J4,B3,C3,G8,L7,M1,A9)
24. Rugged grass around sides of road (5) (K9,D9,M12,B13,K6)
25. Posed in sleek fabric (5) (L8,J13,D8,H10,H1)
26. "Twist and Shout"—that's grand (8) (B10,M10,H8,A13,K12,J4,H13,M5)
27. Music and bread for a waif (10) (E4,M3,B8,J13,I5,A13,F2,E2,D5,M4)
28. For starters, a cold month gets freezing (7) (A5,H2,I2,J10,L2,K10,M1)
29. Break the law to get riches (6) (C1,I1,D9,F5,K8,G10)
30. Bulletin about man and wife from Pacific Islands (3,8) (F11,A2,J9,D1,K5,D13,D3,F1,C6,L3,L8)
31. Incline to love melody (5) (I7,I13,K4,G5,E7)
32. Kind babysitter (6) (C13,L12,K1,B13,I10,L13)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, write to The Atlantic Reprint Department, 8 Arlington Street, Boston, Mass. 02116, enclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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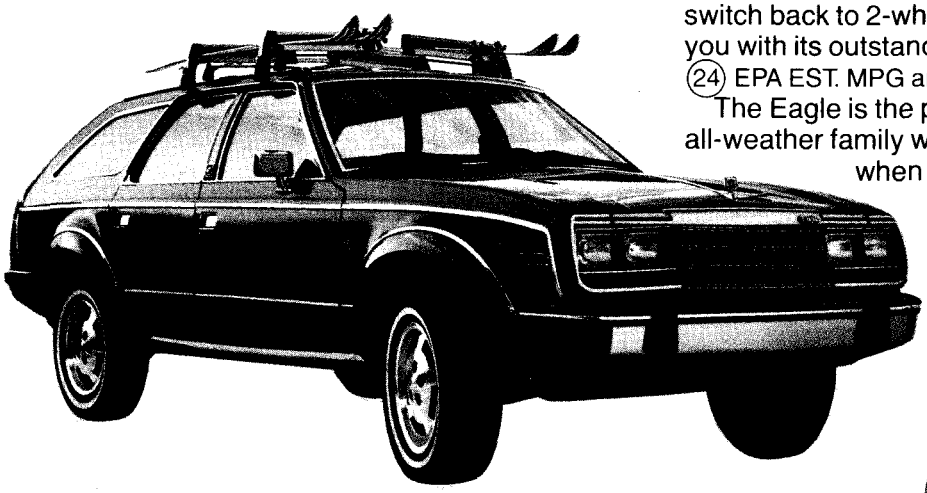

THE 2-WHEEL/4-WHEEL DRIVE Eagle

AMERICAN MOTORS

* 4-cylinder/4-speed. Use these figures for comparison. Your results may differ due to driving speed, weather conditions and trip length. Actual highway figures are probably lower.

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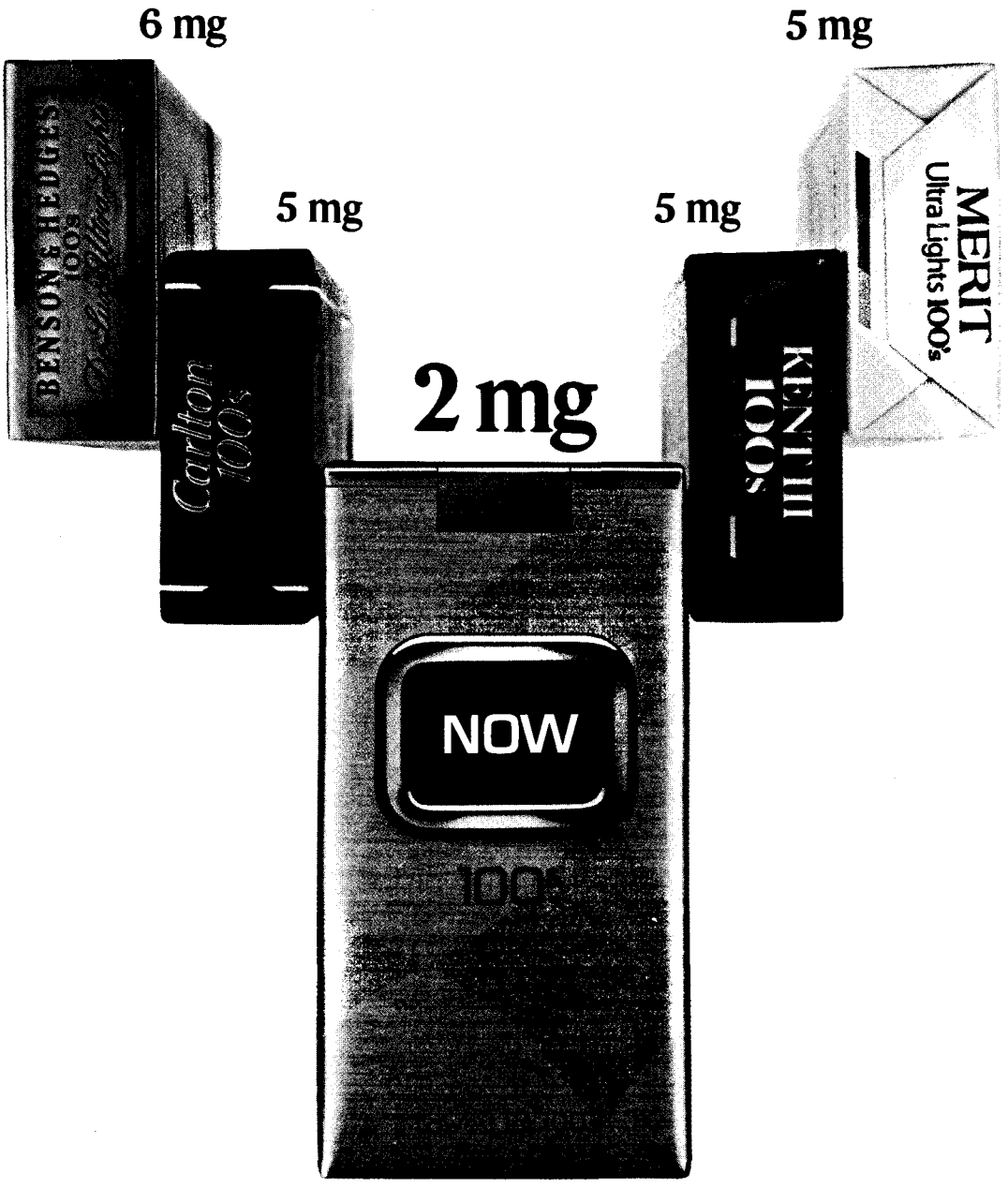

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